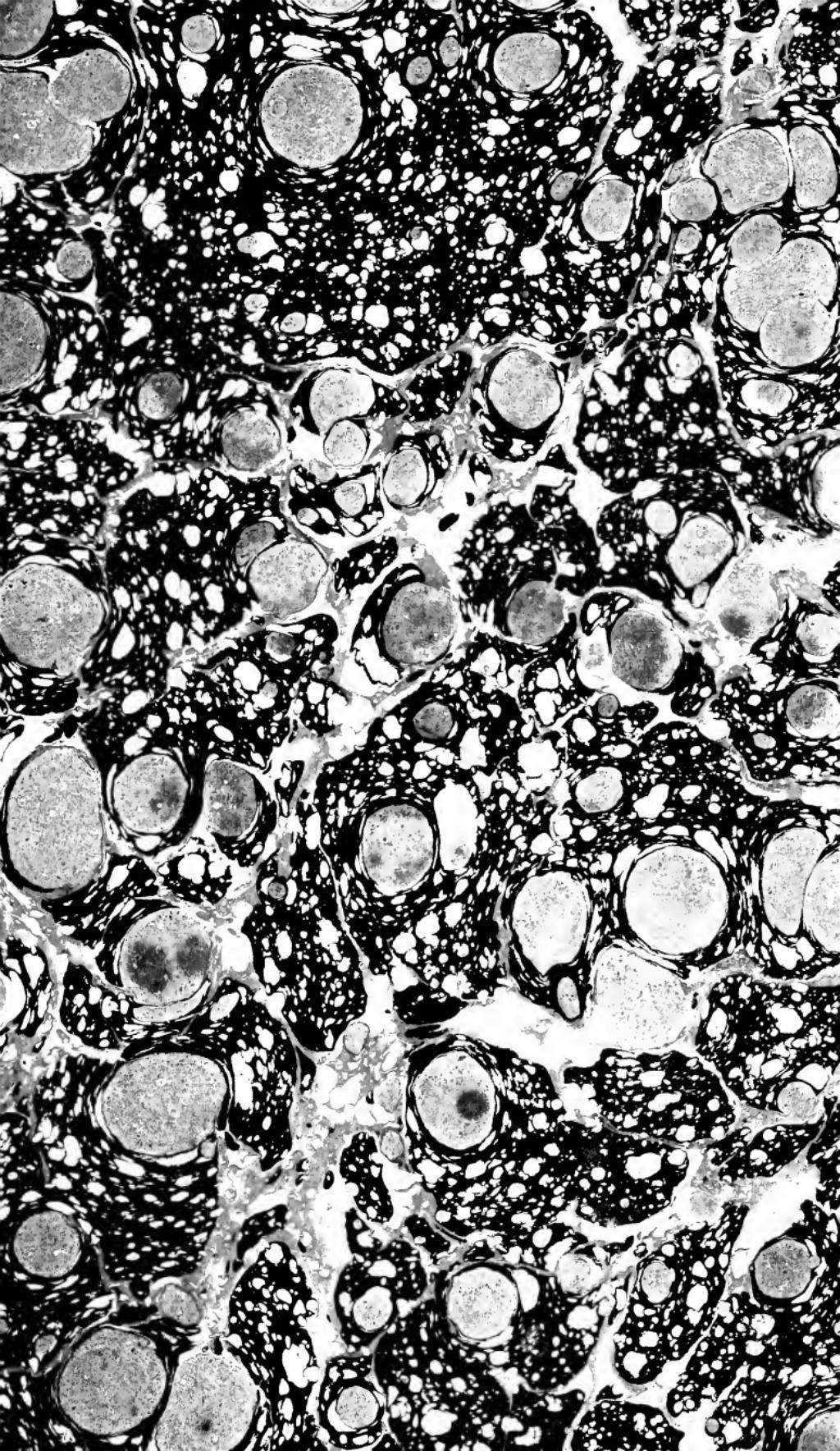


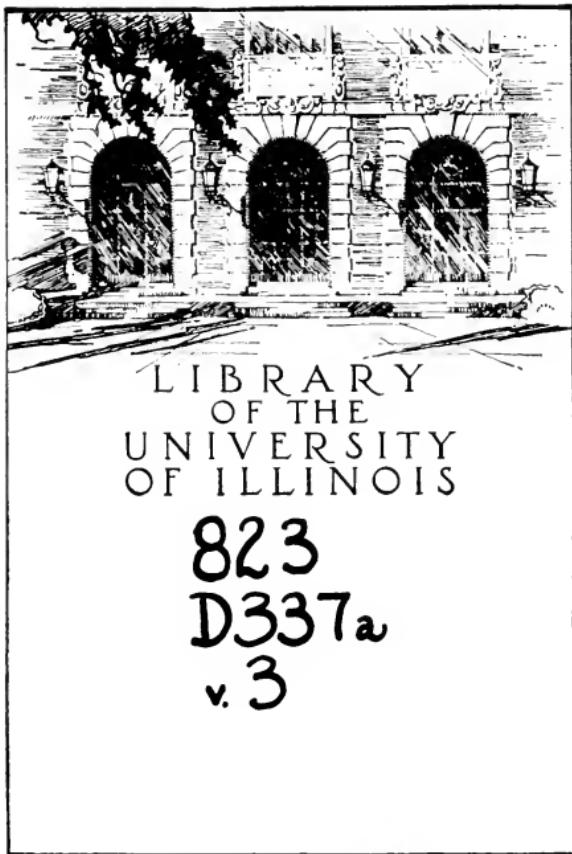


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A N N E T T E.

A TALE.

BY

WILLIAM FREDERICK DEACON,

WITH A

MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

BY

THE HON. SIR T. N. TALFOURD, D.C.L.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ANNETTE.

CHAPTER I.

THE wound received by Alphonse, though serious, was not of a dangerous character, and he would soon have recovered, had it not been for the excitement under which he had laboured for the two preceding days, which, by inducing a high degree of fever, retarded the progress of convalescence. For a whole week, during which period he was confined to his bed, his mind was continually wandering, and in the rare intervals of consciousness he evinced a restless and even fierce impatience at the idea of being reduced to a state of inactivity, which quite alarmed his companions.

His kind host and hostess, who took a deep interest in his fate, having heard the particulars of his story from Delille, paid him the utmost attention during his illness, and resolutely—indeed,

almost sternly—refused the compensation which his fellow-traveller, in the warmth of his gratitude, more than once endeavoured to force on them. But Annette was the invalid's chief attendant. She it was who administered to him his medicines—who soothed his chafed spirits by the delicious tones of her gentle voice—who wiped the clammy perspiration from his brow—refreshed his parched lips—and in his lucid intervals cheered him with the enlivening sunshine of her smiles. She it was who in the dreary watches of the night kept her sleepless vigil by his pillow; and when slumber pressed heavily on him, she moved about his room with a noiseless step, light as that of a fairy; her ear catching, with a blind man's instinct, the slightest stir he made—the slightest change that took place in his breathing; and when, in obedience with her father's wishes, who feared that she might impair her health by such constant attendance in the chamber of sickness, she abandoned her post for a while to the farmer's kindly and attentive dame, it was only to return at the earliest opportunity, and devote her recruited energies to the service of her dearest and oldest friend, the brother of her childhood, the betrothed of her mature years. She could not but remember that to him she owed everything; that he had been her own and her father's saviour; and that he was now paying the penalty of his generous exertions

in their behalf. These thoughts were ever uppermost in her mind, and bitter were the tears she shed when she watched his helpless condition ; heard him fondly breathe her name ; and saw him shake, as with an ague fit, while in his dreams he recalled the horrors from which he had so lately rescued her. But when he woke, and cast his languid eye upon her, the tears, as if by magic, were forced back into their channels, and smiles overspread that sweet face which, but an instant before, had worn the impress of the deepest grief. Oh, in hours of sickness and tribulation what comforter is like a woman ! Man may volunteer heroic sacrifices, such as are noised abroad in the world, and repay him with interest by the renown they bring ; he can shed the last drop of his blood, for the friend of his heart—the country of his birth ; but he is incapable of those more homely and unostentatious sacrifices which woman constantly makes without a murmur, with no desire for publicity, with no thought of praise, with no consciousness, in fact, but that she is fulfilling an ordinary duty. She can abandon all considerations of self without even a sigh of regret ; she can rise to the noblest heights of magnanimity without an effort ; and show humanity that something of the old angelic nature still lingers on earth.

When Delille sometimes gently intimated his impression that their hostess, from her years and

experience, would be a more efficient nurse for the invalid than Annette, the high-minded girl—rising superior to all considerations but those of gratitude—would reply: “Do not, I entreat you, papa, urge me further on this point. I cannot act as you would have me. When the dearest friend we have is hovering between life and death—” here she burst into tears—“my heart tells me that it is no time to listen to the cold dictates of conventional etiquette. Alphonse did not so conduct himself towards us. He did not allow prudence to get the better of friendship. He forgot all thoughts of self when our safety was concerned: why then should I remember it now that he is in danger? But believe me, I am not overtasking my strength as you seem to fear; our kind hostess is more with Alphonse than I am, and I readily resign my post to her when she requires it, knowing well, as you observe, that her ministrations are far more valuable than mine can be.”

In consequence of such affectionate, such indefatigable attention on the part of his two nurses, aided by the natural soundness of his constitution, Alphonse’s disorder soon took a favourable turn; and at the end of the week, the fever had entirely left him, and nothing remained but the debility which it had induced. On the eighth day he was enabled to quit his room, and creep out into the

open air, supported by Annette and her father; and at the expiration of a fortnight he was so completely re-established as to be permitted to resume his journey to the coast.

The bluff, hospitable farmer and his family would fain have had the party prolong their stay; but Delille's anxiety to get safe out of France was more eager than ever, after the proofs he had seen of the disordered state of the country; and Alphonse, notwithstanding that he looked forward with dread to the period of his separation from Annette—of whom, with her father's sanction, he was now the affianced husband—yet could not but experience a thrill of delightful emotion at the prospect of once again joining his brave companions in arms. Besides, he was filled with anxiety respecting his mission to Charette, which had been so long delayed by his illness, that he began to be apprehensive it might prove of no avail. So the travellers once more set forth on their expedition, and their host would gladly have accompanied them, but he was anxious, he observed, to be on the spot, in the event of any dispute with the authorities of Tiffauges growing out of the late catastrophe. He contented himself, therefore, with sending one of his sons with them as a guide; and having furnished them with horses of his own, said impressively as he took leave of them: “When you see General Charette,

tell him from me, that should he at any time stand in need of reinforcements, the hardy peasantry of this district will be always at his service. You have seen a terrible proof of the hatred which we entertain for the republicans, and, believe me, every day that passes over our heads will only tend to strengthen it. Adieu, friends, and may God prosper the good cause!"

The party rode off, and soon after losing sight of the village, they passed the place where, according to the crafty landlord's description, they were to have been waylaid and murdered. It was a sterile, cheerless, solitary spot, and on either side the path were two pools, admirably suited to conceal a deed of blood.

Alphonse pointed it out to Annette, who looked at it with a shudder ; and then instantly averting her eyes, and fixing them on her companion, she said, with emotion :

" And you, dearest Alphonse, were our saviour ! Had it not been for your courage and self-possession we should all have been massacred. Never, while memory holds her seat, can I forget what we owe to you !"

" You overrate my services," replied Alphonse ; " besides, if I have been of use to you, have you not more than repaid me by your affectionate attentions during my illness ? I have but one feeling connected with our late adventure, and that

is, a wish that I could have saved the poor woman who saved us."

"Do not let us speak any more about that frightful tragedy," exclaimed Annette: "fain would I forget it, and the fierce passion of the farmer, when my father recounted his story, little dreaming at the time to what a catastrophe it would lead!"

"The wretches deserved their fate," rejoined Alphonse, sternly; "and had I even had the power, I would not have lifted up a finger to save them. They met but the death which they had designed for us; besides, from what we know to the contrary, they may have committed murder by wholesale both here and in Paris, which I strongly suspect is the case, from such portions of their conversation as I chanced to overhear."

The country on which the travellers were now entering at a brisk pace, bore a marked difference in its character to that more luxuriant and well-wooded landscape scenery which they had traversed previously to their arrival at Tiffauges. It descended with a gradual slope, so gradual as almost to be imperceptible, in the vicinity of the coast, where it formed a sort of dead marshy flat intersected with canals and ditches in every direction. The population, too, was comparatively scanty; the villages few and wide apart; and almost all the people whom they met wore an aspect of squalor and sickliness, the natural consequences

of the injurious air they breathed. Occasionally they passed a mill or a farm-house of the better order, which bore evident marks of having been recently subjected to the tender mercies of the republicans. Whenever the young farmer chanced to observe any of these melancholy proofs of the wanton destructiveness of the enemy, he never failed to bestow a hearty execration on them, and to express a fierce delight at the recollection of that sanguinary retribution which, in common with his father and neighbours, he had inflicted on the marauders at the *auberge*.

The travellers had been nearly three hours on horseback, and were already drawing towards the termination of their journey, when the quick ear of Alphonse caught a dull rumbling sound, proceeding in the direction of the coast, which—as the wind blew from the west—came rolling heavily towards them.

“Hark! what sound is that?” exclaimed the young man, eagerly.

“I heard nothing,” said the more phlegmatic Delille, who had been chatting with Annette and the young farmer;—“but stop! yes, I do think now I hear a dull, distant, booming noise like a thunderclap, or the roar of the sea on the coast; but it cannot be that, for there are no clouds in the sky, and we are not yet near enough to hear the dash of the waves.”

The whole party became suddenly silent, and listened with the deepest attention, when presently they again heard, more distinctly than before, the same dull, heavy sound.

“ ‘Tis the roar of cannon !” exclaimed Alphonse, impetuously. “ Charette is before Machecoul ! Ride on, or we shall be too late to take a share in—”

“ My dear Alphonse, you forget yourself,” said Delille, smiling at the youth’s vehemence. “ Surely you do not intend that my daughter and myself should take a part in this work of glory ! Remember, she is no more a heroine than I am a hero.”

“ Forgive me,” replied Alphonse, “ I spoke in haste and did not know what I was saying. Should my conjecture prove correct, of course I cannot think of bringing you into peril ; no, you must stop at the first house we come to, while I go forward to reconnoitre, and ascertain exactly how matters stand.”

The party rode slowly on ; but before they had proceeded a few yards further, they met one or two bodies of horsemen flying towards them at a furious gallop, covered with dirt and blood.

“ Halt !” shouted Alphonse, addressing the foremost fugitives, who wore the republican uniform, “ and let us know the cause of this desperate panic among you.”

“ Charette—Charette !” was the only answer

vouchsafed to this question, as the horsemen continued their retreat without stopping.

The next who came up was a solitary fugitive, who, thinking from the earnestness with which he was catechized, that Alphonse and his fellow-travellers were republican volunteers—as some few of the farmers were at that period—replied that the republicans had just been defeated before Machecoul, which was by this time in full possession of the enemy.

“Defeated!” exclaimed the young man, humouring the stranger’s fancy.

“Utterly defeated,” rejoined the latter; “and I would advise you, citizens, to turn your horses’ heads in my direction, for if you should happen to be taken prisoners, that devil, Charette, will show you no mercy.”

Without noticing his suggestion, Alphonse was proceeding to put further questions to him, when the sight of another group of fugitives dashing forward at full speed, so increased his apprehensions, that, without another word, he put spurs to his horse, and was out of sight in an instant.

“Thank God!” exclaimed the young man, with emotion, “our cause prospers here as elsewhere. Come, Delille—come, Annette—no more loitering; half an hour or perhaps less, will bring us to Machecoul, where we shall have the gratification of seeing Charette in the first flush of victory.”

“ But is it not placing ourselves unnecessarily in the way of danger,” suggested the timid Delille, “ to confront the great body of our enemies in the very moment of their humiliating retreat ?”

“ Confront !” exclaimed Alphonse, with vehemence, “ who fears to confront a flying enemy ? Do you think, in their desperate hurry to save themselves, that these fellows will have leisure to bestow a thought on us ? I tell you we may ride unarmed, in perfect safety, through a legion of such disheartened curs ! Look yonder ! see how they come tearing towards us by scores ! At the rate at which they are now moving, they will reach Tiffauges before we shall reach Machecoul.”

“ And my father and his neighbours will, I trust, set their mark on a few of them before they reach their journey’s end,” observed the young farmer, with exultation. “ It is a pity they should have such a long ride for nothing. Were you and I alone here,” this was said to Alphonse in an under tone, “ instead of being hampered with an old man and a young woman, we would try between us if we could not bring down a few head of these hunted deer. It would be better sport than even a boar-hunt in the Boeage.”

“ A good suggestion,” rejoined Alphonse ; “ but we must be quiet for the present. Delille, let me entreat you will mend your pace—Annette, love, you are not fatigued ? oh, I see by that smile,

that you have a brave heart, and can bear up like the best of us. Now, then, forward!" and the ardent youth dashed on at a gallop, followed closely by his companions.

As they drew nearer to Machecoul, the signs of defeat became more manifest. Parties of foot-soldiers hurrying on in disorderly masses, were continually passing them—too busy, as Alphonse had observed, with considerations of their own safety, to be able to take any notice of the travellers; horses without riders were tearing furiously across the country; wounded and wearied men were sitting in detached groups by the way-side, some screaming with agony, and others bearing their fate with sullen, stoical hardihood; swords, muskets, lances, and banners, which many of the fugitives had flung from them in the first phrenzy of their flight, were strewed about in all directions; and the loud shouts of the victorious royalists, the roll of the drums, the braying of trumpets, and the ringing of innumerable bells, afforded the most unequivocal proofs of the complete defeat of the republicans.

When the travellers came within sight of the recaptured town, Alphonse, addressing the young farmer, whose bold, frank, manly character had greatly interested him, said: "Charette, I suppose, has stopped the pursuit, or we should have seen our victorious friends before now."

"I dare say his means were inadequate," suggested his companion; "for he is not the man to relax in what he conceives to be his duty, unless under the pressure of necessity."

By this time the party had arrived at the broken and dismantled gates of the town, close to which several dead bodies, both of royalists and republicans, were lying, bearing testimony to the fury of the struggle that had taken place there.

The young farmer here reined up his steed, and turning to Alphonse, said: "As you will now have no further need of my guidance, Monsieur, I will return home immediately, for our village will need all the strength it can muster, as you may well conceive, when you call to mind the horde of ruffians who have fled in that direction."

"But surely you will stay with us a day or two," said Alphonse, "if only that I may make you known to Charette?"

"Not an hour," replied the other; "for my father directed me to make no delay, and will be anxiously awaiting my return this very night."

"Well, since you will not be persuaded," said Alphonse, dismounting from his horse, and assisting Annette to dismount, "we must e'en let you have your own way; but I trust we shall meet again in more prosperous times, when you must become my father's guest, who will give you as much sport in the Bocage as you could desire.

Adieu, my friend, we shall never forget the kindness which your family showed us, at a season when we stood so much in need of it, and I hope that ere long we may have an opportunity of marking our sense of it by deeds as well as words. Adieu," and so saying, the speaker cordially embraced his young guide, who soon afterwards rode off, observing, as he tethered his horses together :

" I suspect there will be warm work in our village to-night, as well as here at Machecoul."

Alphonse, meanwhile, accompanied by Annette and her father, walked forward into the town, which exhibited a sad scene of bloodshed and disorder, and was crowded with the troops of Charette, who were in the highest state of exultation, and were welcomed by a majority of the inhabitants as their deliverers. Unnoticed, in the general confusion and excitement, the travellers passed on without molestation ; and Alphonse, having with some difficulty, and after many inquiries among the shopkeepers, seen his companions quietly settled in homely, comfortable apartments, left them for awhile, in order to go and report his arrival at the General's head-quarters.

CHAPTER II.

CHARETTE, who was the most skilful and enterprising of all the Vendean chiefs, exercised, at this time, supreme command along the coast district, in which he had already gained several victories over the republicans. His army was usually divided into detachments, each of which carried on its operations in a great measure distinct from the others, and only united when the enemy was too strong to be resisted singly. The orders for the movements of these separate detachments all emanated from Charette, who, like Napoleon, was the informing spirit of the whole, and whose commands were obeyed with a readiness which showed the high sense that his officers entertained of his military capacity. He had originally been in the naval service, in which he had risen to the rank of lieutenant; but he had quitted it some time previously

to the breaking out of the revolution, and devoted himself to the sports of the field, of which he was passionately fond. He was slight in figure and of middle height, with a small but brilliant and penetrating eye, a nose turned up in the Tartar fashion, and a mouth remarkable for its shape and width. His nature was stern and obstinate; he had none of that lofty and generous patriotism which glowed in the bosoms of the majority of the Seigneurs; but was too much influenced by a desire for personal aggrandizement, which seemed to be his ruling principle of action. In manner he was cold, reserved, and dictatorial, and in carrying on his military operations he was reckless of human life, and was apt to wink at the excesses of his troops after a victory; moreover, he was a rigid martinet, and was never known to forgive or forget any act of disobedience.

Alphonse found this celebrated chief standing in the centre of a group of officers, in front of one of the principal buildings of the town, which he had selected as his head-quarters during his stay. He was in high spirits, and a gracious smile—an unusual thing with him—played round his mouth, as he congratulated his men on the triumph they had gained with so little comparative loss.

The young man stood for a few minutes among the group, eyeing Charette with great interest and curiosity, and then pressing forward into the circle,

said, with a bow of more respect than he would perhaps have shown to a Marshal of France :

“ General, may I speak a few words with you on a matter of pressing importance ?”

The chief’s countenance instantly resumed the cold, grave expression peculiar to it ; and glancing shrewdly at Alphonse’s peasant costume, he replied :

“ Who are you, Sir ? Whence come you ?”

“ My name is De Chatillon,” was the laconic answer, “ and I come from the army of the Seigneurs !”

“ Oh, indeed !” said the General, with somewhat more of courtesy in his manner, and then beckoning Alphonse to follow him, he led the way into the house, while his officers, in obedience to his orders, repaired to their respective posts.

Before, however, he dismissed his staff, Charette turning to one of them who stood nearest him, said : “ Captain Bernier, you will be pleased to bear in mind that the town capitulated on a promise of good-treatment ; and that it is policy in us, as well as justice, to keep faith with it. To you I intrust the safety of the citizens ; and if any of my troops are caught plundering, or otherwise ill-treating them, you will, that instant, report the case to me, and I will see the delinquent properly punished. You hear, Sir ?”

“ Yes, General.”

“ Well, take care that my orders are strictly

attended to, and that they be instantly promulgated among the troops. You may retire, Captain."

When they entered the apartment, Charette made a sign to Alphonse to be seated ; and taking a chair beside him, after carefully closing the door, said : " Matters of business are best confined to the hearing of those for whom they were intended. My experience as a soldier has already taught me this. Now, Monsieur de Chatillon, I am ready to receive your communication."

Alphonse, hereupon, proceeded to inform the General of the message that had been intrusted to him by the Council of War at Thouars, to the effect, that as the Seigneurs were about to attempt the capture of Parthenay and Fontenay, and had learned that the latter was garrisoned by a strong republican force, they were anxious that he should co-operate with them, so as to increase their chances of success.

While the young man was speaking, Charette's countenance expressed strong marks of surprize ; and at length, in a tone of grave displeasure, he observed : " In intrusting a message like this to you, Monsieur, the Seigneurs have been guilty of great inadvertence."

" How am I to understand you, General ?" said Alphonse, beginning to feel his indignation rise.

" Hear me out, young man," continued Charette, calmly, " and with temper, if you please ;

for your feelings will have no weight with me. The message with which you have been intrusted, should have been delivered at least a fortnight since."

"And so it would have been," interrupted Alphonse, eagerly, "but that unfortunately I was taken ill on the road."

"It must have been a serious illness indeed, to justify such a tardy execution of orders."

Alphonse here related the circumstances under which he had been attacked, and the state of utter prostration to which the fever had reduced him; adding, that he had taken the very earliest opportunity of his ability to sit on horseback, to resume his journey.

This statement, which bore evident marks of truth, and was made with terseness and simplicity, was not without its effect on Charette, whose manner relaxed as he replied: "Well, it certainly was an unlucky seizure, and the effects of the delay might have been deeply injurious to the good cause; but fortunately everything has turned out well—Fontenay has been captured, and without my co-operation."

"Fontenay captured?" exclaimed Alphonse, with animation.

"Yes, and Parthenay, too! The intelligence of these successes reached me not four days since," said Charette.

"And I was not present at either of these glorious triumphs!" replied the young man, bitterly.

“ General, my visit to you was one which I myself volunteered, for I hoped to have returned with a reinforcement in time to share, at least in the victory of Fontenay, if not of Parthenay ; and now, cruel, inexorable fortune has robbed me of my anticipated glory ! Oh, De Lescure ! what will you think of your absent friend ? My father, too, and Henri—but no, they are considerate and generous, and will not condemn me unheard.”

“ My young friend,” said Charette, with more kindness than he had yet manifested, “ you view this matter in too serious a light. The case is one that speaks so clearly for itself, that it cannot be misconstrued, even by the most inveterate prejudice. Your colleagues, finding that you have not returned, will, of course, take for granted that you have been arrested by some of those bands of fugitive conscripts who now infest the Marais. But were it not so, you will soon have it in your power, by a simple statement of facts, to set yourself right with them ; and if glory be your object, you will have abundant opportunities of achieving it, for if my information be correct, the Convention, alarmed at our successes, at Bressuire and Thouars, have ordered a force of forty thousand men to move direct on La Vendée ; and the arrival of these reinforcements, one half of whom are said to be troops of the line, may be daily expected, if they have not already crossed the Loire.”

“Whether they be troops of the line, or not,” exclaimed Alphonse, proudly, “they will but share the fate of their predecessors. In General Quetinou we vanquished, I suspect, a better soldier than any the Republic can now spare for this home service, which it professes to hold in such contempt.”

“There you are in error,” rejoined Charette: “the Convention being at length thoroughly roused to the exigency of the case, will employ all the best means at its command to crush this dangerous insurrection. Rely on it, the difficulties of our position are yet but in their infancy. Hitherto, we have had to contend chiefly against raw conscripts and the dregs of the Parisian *canaille*, but henceforth our struggle will be with trained, veteran troops, against whom it is scarcely possible we should ever make head in the open field.”

Alphonse smiled, and even expressed surprize at this gloomy view of things, whereupon Charette, replied: “You may demur to my opinion, but what I tell you is perfectly true: our difficulties are only beginning; and as for the war being one of brief duration, as some of the hotter spirits among my troops suppose, it will be protracted through years of suffering to both parties. Be this, however, as it may, my part is taken; I have pledged myself, come weal, come woe, to the cause of royalty, and I will stick to the ship so long as a single timber remains afloat.”

“A just and noble resolution,” exclaimed Alphonse, warmly, “and which you will never repent, be the issue of our struggle what it may.”

“Monsieur de Chatillon,” said the General, gravely, “repentance is for the irresolute or the enthusiastic; but not for one who embarked in this contest with his eyes open, after maturely weighing all the consequences. Where there has been no haste, there can be no repentance; and throughout my chequered career, I never yet took a step that I was not afterwards prepared to justify. But this is wandering from the mark; you have no further communications, I presume, to make to me from the Seigneurs?”

“None whatever; I have fulfilled the whole of my errand,” replied Alphonse.

“And now you will take the first opportunity of returning to the army of the Seigneurs?”

“That is my intention,” was Alphonse’s reply; “but I must first see to the safe departure of some royalist friends of mine who journeyed with me from Thouars, and who are anxious to quit France without delay, being on the list of the proscribed at Nantes, and having been once already arrested by the republicans.”

There was something in the young man’s manner as he gave this hurried explanation, that arrested the attention of the worldly, quick-witted

Charette, who fixing a penetrating gaze on him, said : " Friends of yours, eh ? May I ask if the council at Thouars knew that you were burdened with these encumbrances, when they dispatched you on this important mission to the Marais ? "

" My friends have been no encumbrances," replied Alphonse, evading a direct answer to this question ; " on the contrary, it is to their care that I owe my recovery from a fever which would otherwise have been fatal."

" I have no desire to ask impertinent questions," observed Charette, after a slight pause ; " but perhaps you will permit me to inquire whether these friends of yours were intrusted with the secret of your communication."

" Certainly not," rejoined Alphonse ; " they merely knew that I was journeying to the Marais to see you on business of moment, and being bound in the same direction, they availed themselves of my escort through a disturbed district."

" I am glad you have been so discreet," said Charette, with a significant smile ; " for it is never safe to intrust women with secrets of importance, no matter how young, or fond, or beautiful they may be."

" Women !" exclaimed Alphonse, opening his eyes wide with astonishment : " I made no mention of any woman ! "

" True, you did not," replied the General ; " but when a young man cannot state, without a

certain degree of embarrassment and hesitation, so simple—so very simple a fact as that he was accompanied on his journey hither by some friends, the inference, to my thinking at least, is inevitable—namely, that a fair lady formed one of his companions. Ah, I see, I am right! Well, well, I have no claim on your confidence; but trust me, the sooner your friends have embarked the better, for glory is a monopolist, and endures no divided allegiance; besides, a soldier fighting for a cause like ours, and surrounded too, with such perils, has no right, and should have no leisure to be dallying in the enchanted bowers of Love. You will forgive my plain speaking, I hope, in consideration of the motive that prompts it."

While Charette was addressing him, Alphonse's ingenuous countenance underwent several changes. At first he was simply mortified; next, he felt a strong inclination to resent, what he deemed, the impertinence of one who till now was an utter stranger to him; but his closing remark, accompanied as it was by a kindly comment in the conciliatory shape of a smile, at length reconciled him to his plain-speaking.

"I will not deny, General," said Alphonse, "that a young lady and her father, who have known me from childhood, and regard me quite as a member of their family, were my companions on this journey, and I thank God for it; for, as I told you a few minutes ago,

it is to them I owe it, that I am at this present moment standing in vigorous health before you. Having said thus much, you will pardon me if I refrain from alluding further to a matter which is purely a private one, and of interest only to myself."

With the ready tact of a man of the world, Charette at once dropped the subject, and directed the conversation into a new channel. "You talked just now," he observed, "of setting off without loss of time to rejoin the Seigneurs, but I fear on reaching Fontenay you will find the major part of the army dispersed: the peasants, according to their usual custom having doubtless, ere this, hurried back to carry the news of their victories to their wives and families, and look after their agricultural pursuits, which not a few of them have more at heart than even the cause in which they have so gallantly distinguished themselves."

"Yes, I remember that both at Bressuire and Thouars we lost many of our men in consequence of their eagerness to return home," said Alphonse: "they could not be persuaded, in their simplicity, but that when the victory was over, all was done that was necessary to be done. But they will rally again the instant they hear of the arrival of the republican reinforcements."

"No fear of that," replied Charette, "for what the Vendean peasantry want in discipline they make up in courage and determination; and the

Seigneurs, I understand, have already gone off to their respective districts in order to reassemble them, leaving a small garrison in each of the captured towns."

"In that case, then, I shall at once rejoin my father," said Alphonse, "and with our joint efforts we shall soon succeed in raising such a body of bold, zealous peasants as shall give the new republican reinforcements more occupation than may be agreeable to them."

After some further indifferent remarks, Charette, pleading the indispensable duties of a soldier, put an end to the interview, and Alphonse repaired to the lodgings where he had left the Delilles.

He found Annette alone, and without noticing her pensive, thoughtful demeanour, he immediately began talking with her on the subject that for the moment was uppermost in his mind—namely, his interview with the commander of the troops in the Marais.

"He is a bluff, bold, stern soldier," he remarked, "and one who seems born to command. If the King had many more such generals, the cause of the monarchy would not be long doubtful."

"You like him, then?" said Annette, in a listless, indifferent tone.

"I respect and admire him," replied Alphonse, "but as to liking, that is a different matter. He seems to me to be utterly wanting in enthusiasm,

and I should say that he was a man far more calculated to inspire awe than affection. He has none of the high-toned feelings of De Lescure, or the frank, companionable qualities of Henri ; but has a sort of icy coldness and reserve about him that check all approach to intimacy. Yet he was courteous and even kind to me in his way ; and could I but divest myself of an impression that he is a man without a heart, I might in time be brought to regard him with affection."

" You have drawn a very unamiable character," said Annette, " but such as I fear is too common among soldiers. From your description, I have not the slightest curiosity to see the General."

" What !" exclaimed Alphonse, with surprize, " not wish to see the most skilful of the royalist commanders ?"

" No," was the reply, " for everything connected with war is my abhorence, and never henceforth shall I hear or read of the glorious achievements of this or that hero, but my imagination will instantly transport me to the desolate cottage of the maniac girl and her heart-broken mother."

While Annette was speaking, Delille entered the room. He was in unusually high spirits, and addressing Alphonse: " Give me joy," he exclaimed, " for I have at length succeeded in finding the means of escape from this distracted country. No more fear of arrest ; all is settled, and to-morrow,

at nine o'clock, we take our leave of France, not to return till more auspicious times."

"And do you really think of going so soon?" asked Alphonse, in accents of surprize and grief, the conviction now, for the first time, flashing fully on his mind, that the hour of his separation from Annette was at hand.

"Indeed I do," was Delille's eager answer; "and I have already arranged matters with a fisherman whom I met by the river's side, and whose boat will sail for the Isle of Noirmoutier to-morrow morning. When there, he tells me, I shall easily be able to procure a passage to Jersey, by an English sloop which starts for that island in the afternoon, and is now lying off the coast."

Alphonse made no reply to this announcement, but looked wistfully at Annette, whose countenance expressed the emotions of which her heart was full, but which for her father's sake, she made every effort to conceal.

"You cannot surely wonder at my anxiety to quit France," pursued Delille, "when you call to mind the sufferings which my child and myself have lately endured! It is the only chance left us of regaining something like tranquillity of mind."

"Tranquillity, papa, perhaps we may obtain," said Annette; "but happiness—no, there is no happiness away from one's native country, more especially when that country is France."

" My dear child," rejoined her father, " our absence will be but temporary: in a year, or probably less, these distractions will have subsided, public order will be restored, and we shall then return, and our friend here will be the first to welcome us."

" God grant that it may be so!" was Annette's desponding reply.

" Have you decided on any particular place of residence when you reach England?" asked Alphonse.

" Of course we shall go to London," replied Delille, " and seek the hospitality of Mr. Danton, who, as you have often heard me say, is the uncle of my lamented wife. He is a rough, but kind-hearted man, and during my numerous commercial trips to England, before I quitted business, always received me with cordiality. Annette, too, was, I remember, a particular favourite with him; but as he has not seen her since she was eleven years of age, I fear it is not improbable that he may have forgotten her altogether."

" Oh, no, papa!" said Annette, " that cannot be the case, for you know it is not two years since you had a letter from him, and then he inquired very kindly after me. But, notwithstanding his kindness, he is such an odd man that I never liked him, and I doubt much whether he is improved by age."

" Annette," said Delille, gravely, " that odd

man, as you call him, was your mother's uncle, the friend and guardian of her childhood."

" And for my dear mother's sake, papa, as well as your own, I will endeavour to like him ; though I cannot forget how he used to laugh at and abuse the French, for what he called their love of grimace."

Soon afterwards, the three friends sate down to the last dinner they were destined to take together for some time. It was dispatched in comparative silence, except on the part of Delille, who endeavoured to cheer the spirits of the party ; and when it was concluded, and the senior had quietly composed himself for his usual siesta—a habit which he observed he had learned from Danton—Annette and Alphonse went out for a stroll in the neighbourhood, as on the evening when they wandered away to the Castle of Tiffauges. Silently they passed along the bustling streets, and took their way to a solitary spot of ground, gravelled and planted with trees, where they continued pacing up and down for some hours.

" Do you remember," said Annette, looking pensively in her companion's face, " the last walk we took on the banks of the Loire, previously to your departure for Paris ?"

" Remember it !" exclaimed Alphonse. " Can you ask the question ? How can I forget anything in which you are concerned ?"

“ I was more sanguine then than I am now,” continued Annette: “ why, I cannot say ; but I felt a strong persuasion that our separation would be but a brief one. I was right then in my impression, and I devoutly hope that I may not be right now ; but something tells me, Alphonse, that when we part to-morrow, it is to meet no more on this side the grave.”

“ Why, Annette,” said Alphonse, affected in spite of himself by the sad solemnity of her manner, “ you are as desponding now as you were on that delicious evening when we rambled among the ruins of Tiffauges Castle. This must not be. You must cheer up, and look confidently forward to happier times. Your father, you know, has now sanctioned our engagement ; and when once this disastrous war is brought to a close, what is to prevent our passing our lives happily together ?”

“ Your own ardent, enthusiastic spirit, Alphonse, which will ever be urging you to seek the post of danger. Remember, you return to scenes of war and bloodshed—” and unable to continue, she placed her hand before her eyes, and burst into tears.

Alphonse passionately embraced the weeping girl, and having with some difficulty succeeded in calming her agitation, he said :

“ A soldier’s life, dearest, is certainly not without its hazards ; but think how many who have braved

far greater perils than I shall ever be called on to confront, have lived to a good old age, and died quietly in their beds. Why should not their lot be mine? Trust me, I am no quixotic soldier, but am far too discreet wantonly to court danger from a mere love of bravado. No, if I hope to be useful to my King, I must learn to temper boldness with prudence; and acting on this principle, surely the chances are in my favour! We were in far greater peril the other evening, when we passed through the apartment of those desperate ruffians, than I ever expect to be during this war; yet you see, with a little self-possession we escaped it!"

"Oh, that dreadful night!" exclaimed Annette; "never shall I forget it, were my days to be protracted to those of the patriarchs!"

"And I," replied Alphonse, "shall never cease to recall with the liveliest interest every circumstance, no matter how trivial, connected with our journey hither. Hours—days of happiness, are, I trust, in store for us; but none can be more delightful—to my mind at least—than those that are just passed; for have I not, dearest, had you constantly by my side, to feed me with your smiles, to soothe me with the sweet music of your voice, and intoxicate my senses by the radiant beauty of that countenance, which has never yet turned but in fondness towards me?"

"And now our companionship draws to a close,"

rejoined Annette, sadly, “ and the hour approaches fast that must doom my father and myself to exile. This is the last sun I shall ever see go down in France ! Do you recollect how often, in earlier and happier days, we used to see it crimsoning the waters of the Loire, and dropping behind the old castle at Nantes ? Oh, Alphonse, how dim, and weak, and cold, are the visions of Hope compared with those of Memory ! I can muse—dream—live over again in the sunny past, and at times almost imagine that I am happy ; while the future is a chill, cloudy realm, peopled with ghastly images, and alive with the horrid din of war. But I have affected you—I see I have—by my own melancholy presentiments ! I will not pursue the theme, but as you wish it—and your slightest wish is a law with me—I will endeavour to look forward with hope as well as back with regret.”

They had been seated together, on a wooden bench that encircled one of the trees, during the latter part of this conversation ; but now, hearing the sound of voices, they rose, and at Annette’s request, retraced their steps into the town. For some minutes they walked on without a word being said on either side ; at length Annette again addressed her companion, and as she did so, Alphonse felt her small, slender, white hand pressed gently on his arm :

“ As this is the last evening we shall be alone

together, let me conjure you, while yet time allows, to make me one parting promise. You are going back to scenes of bloodshed, to encounter dangers, to share in defeats and triumphs, to achieve most probably renown. Should this be so, and the war end as your sanguine hopes predict, your name and your deeds will be uppermost in men's minds ; you will be brought into constant contact with the wealthy and the high-born ; courtly ladies will vie with each other for your favour, pleasure will spread its thousand allurements before you, and the world will be a world of enchantment in your eyes. Now, Alphonse, do not deem me selfish, if I conjure you, by the happy past and the cheerless present, not to forget, amid the pomps and the enjoyments of these new seductive scenes, that there is *one* far away, in exile, whose every thought is fixed on you—who never offers up a prayer to Heaven but your name is breathed in it—who has no other use of life than to devote it to you—no sense of suffering, but when you suffer ; no sense of enjoyment, but when you are happy—and who, were sorrow to be your lot instead of joy, would deem it the highest boon that could be offered her, to share adversity with you. Oh, Alphonse ! it is not the soldier and the patriot crowned with laurels, and raising his proud head among princes, that is dear in my eyes, entwined with my heart's fondest and most sacred feelings,

for I am a plain, unambitious, domestic woman, whose thoughts and feelings are all humble, and shrink from the glare of publicity ; it is the kindly, generous, disinterested friend, the sharer in my girlish amusements, the partaker in my studies, the saviour of my life—this, and not the laurelled hero, is the being I love—the one to whom memory clings with the most tenacity. So, Alphonse, as I shall never cease to bear this cherished being in mind, will you, in return, promise to keep me ever uppermost in your thoughts ; or have I asked too much ?”

“ My dearest girl,” replied Alphonse, half reproachfully, “ what more can I say to reassure you than what I have already said ? Dismiss, I implore you, these doubts, unworthy alike of you and me. I live but in the hope of our speedy reunion ; and could I bring myself to think we should never meet again, I would at once sacrifice fame, fortune, friends—all without a murmur, and become the eager sharer of your exile. But we shall meet again, and this before a year has passed over our heads. It is now autumn, ere summer again clothes the willows—your favourite willows, Annette !—on the banks of the Loire, the present civil war will have ceased, you will come back to France, and we shall be dwellers together in my father’s château. Cherish, as I shall do, this hope ; let it bring cheerfulness to your morning

thoughts and your midnight dreams ; and believe that the sun may sooner turn from his course, than I forget the playmate of my childhood—the affianced of my maturer years. The chances of war are variable ; there is glory as well as humiliation in a soldier's career ; and it is possible, as you say, that I may see other women, young, beautiful, and high-born ; but for me there will be but one Annette, with whom flowers will spring up beneath my feet, and without whom, all will be cold and barren in nature and my own heart.”

“ I am content,” replied Annette, and not another word was spoken.

CHAPTER III.

BRIGHTLY broke the morning—the last morning that the Delilles were to see flooding the sky of France with radiance. Often during their journey had the thoughts of this separation occurred to Alphonse, but with the natural eagerness of youth to exclude an unwelcome idea, he at once dismissed it from his mind, remembering only that Annette was still his daily companion. Even when they had entered Machecoul, and it became evident that Delille would brook no further delay, he still, with a true lover's fondness, trusted to the chapter of accidents; but now, when he saw Annette, at a sign from her father, rise from the breakfast-table to equip herself for her departure, he could no longer doubt the disheartening fact, that the moment of parting was really come. Prepared as he was for it—more especially by the conversation of the preceding evening—it yet gave him a shock

like that which we feel on hearing the news of a death, which, nevertheless, we have daily expected for weeks.

Annette, attired still in her peasant's dress, had re-entered the room, and her father was approaching Alphonse to bid him a long farewell, when a tap was heard at the door, and the boatman made his appearance with intelligence that the tide served, and that all was ready.

"And we, too, are ready!" exclaimed Delille, and held out his arms to embrace his young friend.

"No, no," said Alphonse, "we part not here; I shall go with you to Noirmoutier, for it may be months ere we shall meet again," and taking Annette's hand, he led her to the door, gratified even by this brief postponement of an inevitable moment.

The boat, which was a small, sturdy fishing-smack, such as is used along that marshy coast, lay by the water's side, and contained, besides the boatman, but one individual—a strange, uncouth, sullen, ghastly-looking fellow, who sate at the helm.

Immediately the party had taken their places the sails were unfurled, and the vessel went merrily down the stream beneath the influence of a favouring breeze. For some minutes the travellers, occupied each with his own sad thoughts, maintained

an unbroken silence ; but at length Delille—who, notwithstanding his affection for Alphonse, was delighted at the idea of his safe escape out of the country—wishing to divert the attention of his companions, began conversing with the boatman, and being struck with the very peculiar aspect of the man who steered, asked who he was, and whether he were unwell.

“ He is a Collibert,” replied the boatman, in an under tone, “ and never looks better nor worse than he does now.”

“ A Collibert !” said Delille ; “ what is that ? I never heard of the name.”

“ Likely enough,” returned the boatman, “ for they are a set of people not much known or talked about. They have dwelt here, among the marshes, from generation to generation, for ages, and hold no intercourse with the neighbourhood, but marry among themselves, and have such strange, wild beliefs as would stagger you. We hardly look on them as countrymen, for they live wholly apart from us, either in their boats or in huts built on the sands, and support themselves by fishing. Poor, ignorant, unsocial, and half savage as they are, they are marvellously proud of their independence, and would not exchange their lot for the noblest that could be offered them.”

“ How then comes this man in your employ ?” asked Delille.

“ In my employ ! Bless you, Monsieur, he would not accept wages from me, if I were to offer him the wealth of the Indies. He assists me solely out of kindness, because being a fisherman myself, and knowing something of the ways of the Colliberts, I had it in my power, about a year ago, to be of service to his child who was dying ; and this, I believe, is the only thing that could ever induce him to act with courtesy towards a neighbour. I saw him idling near the town yesterday, shortly after you left me, and knowing that his fishing had not been productive of late, I thought perhaps, he might like to earn a few *sous*, so offered him this job ; but in his own churlish way he reminded me of what I had formerly done for his child, and agreed to help me for nothing.”

“ This is a singular story,” said Delille, “ and reminds me of the Cagots of the Pyrenees. Are these Colliberts a numerous tribe ?”

“ No,” rejoined the boatman, “ they are fast diminishing, and probably in a few years will become extinct.”

Struck by this account of a people so new to him, and of whose existence scarcely seven out of ten Frenchmen had ever heard, Delille took his seat near the Collibert, and eyed him with much interest and curiosity. He was an under-sized, square-built man, with a retreating forehead, and flat, swarthy features ; a sickly hue, arising, no

doubt, from the swamps among which he lived, was diffused over his cheeks, and his eyes, which were wide apart and deep-sunk in his head, expressed cunning, not unmixed with a certain bold, dogged determination of character. His dress was simple to a degree, and scarcely sufficed, one would have supposed, for the purposes of warmth. He wore thick wooden shoes of a most primitive make ; a loose threadbare robe made out of coarse cloth or flannel descended to his ankles, and was confined at the waist with a dirty, ragged cord, and beneath this, drawers or trousers were visible, manufactured in the rudest manner from the rough, raw skin of a wolf or fox, or some such animal. His head and neck were bare, and so were his arms below the elbows ; he had a stoop from the chest as if, notwithstanding his square build, he laboured under a weakness of the lungs ; and he frequently gave vent to that short, dry, hacking cough, so indicative of a consumptive tendency.

After observing him attentively for some minutes, Delille commenced a conversation with him as follows : "That cough of yours appears to be troublesome ; I fear the marshy air you breathe is not very conducive to health."

"It is the air my fathers breathed before me ; and if it was good enough for them, it is quite good enough for me," was the terse and churlish answer.

“Really you are quite a philosopher,” resumed Delille, but perceiving from the fellow’s stare that he did not comprehend him, he added: “Have you no wish to change your place of abode?”

“Why should I change it? Go where I will, I can but have the sky above my head, and the earth beneath my feet.”

“That is true,” rejoined Delille; “but some climates are more favourable to human life than others.”

“Men die elsewhere, as well as at the mouth of the Sèvre Niortaise,” said the Collibert, sullenly.

“But at least they enjoy more of health and happiness during that term of life,” pursued Delille, wishing to draw the man out.

“How so?” was the ready rejoinder; “they can but be happy in their way, and if I am happy in mine, where is their advantage over me?”

“Upon my word,” said Delille, turning laughingly to Annette and Alphonse, who, despite their sadness, listened with interest to this colloquy, “our friend here reasons so logically, that I know not how to answer him.” Here addressing himself again to the Collibert, he said: “You are aware, of course, of the disturbances in this neighbourhood?”

“Yes, I witnessed the attack on Machecoul yesterday.”

“ And did you look on,” asked Delille, “ without siding with either party ?”

“ Why should I ?” replied the Collibert ; “ what are other men’s quarrels to me and mine ?”

“ But surely as a Frenchman you ought to take some interest in them ?”

“ I am not a Frenchman !” was the unsocial reply.

“ In God’s name, what are you, then ?” exclaimed Delille, his nationality somewhat ruffled by the fellow’s dogged apathy.

“ I am a Collibert, free as the air I breathe—holding intercourse with none but my own tribe—and bound by no laws but of their making.”

“ That is perfectly true,” said the boatman ; “ for when one of these fellows was sent to the galleys, last year, for having made rather too free with a neighbour’s poultry, he had the cool impudence to justify himself, on the score of the usages of his tribe ; and notwithstanding all the fine, legal speeches of the municipal authorities, he could not be persuaded that he was rightly punished.”

“ Punished !” retorted the Collibert, fiercely. “ You may well talk of punishment—you who have been oppressing and proscribing us, and making us the subject of your scorn and ridicule, for scores of years past, merely because our customs are not your customs—because we are poor, and you are rich—because we are ignorant, and you wise in

your own conceit—because we are the weaker, and you are the stronger party.”

“ If such be your feelings towards your countrymen,” replied Delille, “ I wonder you could reconcile yourself to taking a place among us here to-day.”

“ In the days that are past,” exclaimed the Collibert, “ that man”—looking towards the boatman—“ did me a service; and it is a custom with us never to forget a kindness, or forgive an injury. And now, ask me no more questions, for I am weary and will not answer.”

The vessel now issued out of the narrow river that separates Noirmoutier from the mainland, and as the brisk wind was still in their favour, in a short time the travellers reached the island. They here bade adieu to the boatman and his strange, uncouth assistant; and Alphonse being curious to ascertain how far the former’s account of the Collibert’s pecuniary disinterestedness was correct, offered him a piece of money, which the churl immediately flung from him into the sea, though the sullen expression of his countenance somewhat relaxed when Annette, with her own sweet, cordial smile, wished him a speedy restoration to health; and he gazed after her, as she quitted the boat, with an interest which showed that even he—cold and unsocial as he appeared—was not wholly insensible to the magic of youth and beauty.

Delille’s first act on stepping ashore was to

make inquiries after the Jersey vessel of which the boatman had spoken ; and to his great satisfaction he learned that a small English sloop, which had been lying at anchor off the coast for some days, was on the eve of sailing for the Channel Islands. He immediately sought out the captain who, pointing to the ship which was riding about two hundred yards off shore, told him that he had several emigrants already on board, but that he thought he could manage to find room for him and his daughter. "But you must bear a hand, Mounseer, for time and tide wait for no man—half an hour longer, and you would have been too late," added the rough tar, who was standing amid a group of sailors, one or two of whom were in the act of pushing off a boat, which had been drawn up on the beach.

"We are ready to embark this instant," replied Delille.

"But where are your thingumbobs?" said the captain. "We must stow them away at once."

"My what?" asked Delille, not comprehending the mysterious nautical phrase, "thingumbobs."

A sailor who overheard this brief dialogue, turning to a brother tar who stood next him, exclaimed : "I say, Jack, did you ever see such a set as these Mounseers? Don't understand plain English!"

"How should they, Bill?" replied his compassionate neighbour, giving a hitch up to his trou-

sers : “ consider the eddication they’ve had, poor devils !”

“ Ah, to be sure,” resumed the former speaker, “ what could you expect from fellows as eats frogs, and turns up their noses at good roast-beef ?”

“ Now, Mounseer Polly-Woo,” said the captain, “ the boat’s ready, so please step in. As you carry all your traps on your back, like an Irish hodman, you won’t add much to the sloop in the way of ballast ;” and thus speaking, he gave his arm to Delille, who, having taken an affectionate leave of Alphonse, hurried down to the water’s edge, and, with moistened eye, took his seat in the boat.

Annette and her betrothed slowly followed, and the former immediately attracted the eyes of the sailors, one of whom whispered to another : “ My eyes, but she’s a clean-rigged craft ! Old Polly-Woo’s darter, I ’spose, Mumselle Polly-Woo.—I’m blest if she don’t beat Poll of the Pint all to shivers !”

“ The craft’s a tidy craft enough,” replied the other sailor ; “ but Poll would make two on her.”

“ Farewell, dearest Alphonse ! don’t forget Annette—*your* Annette,” exclaimed the fond girl, as she prepared to step into the boat.

It was a bitter—an agonizing moment—life has few such, and the tears which she could no longer repress, now rolled down her cheeks in torrents. Irresolute she stood, with her hand clasped in

Alphonse's, and her eyes turned upon him with all that intense affection which characterizes the first love of a young and devoted woman.

"Forget you, dearest!" replied Alphonse, "oh, Annette!" and unable to utter a word more, he turned aside to conceal his emotion.

"Come, Mumselle," said the rough, but kindly-natured captain, "I'm sorry to interrupt your talk with this young gentleman, but best friends must part," and he advanced to assist her into the boat.

"God for ever bless you, love," said the weeping girl, for the last time addressing Alphonse. "Think of me constantly, as I shall of you, and, above all, don't forget your promise," and with these words she warmly pressed his hand, and took her seat by her father's side.

In a few minutes the crew had all embarked, and plying their oars lustily, the boat soon reached the vessel.

And now the anchor was weighed, the sails were unfurled, the helm was put about, and away went the sloop, scudding merrily through the seas under the favouring influence of what sailors call "a spanking breeze." Alphonse stood alone on the beach, watching its progress with feelings of indescribable emotion, and could distinctly see Annette standing on the deck waving her hand in token of farewell. At length the vessel dwindled to a speck in the distance; but even when it was no longer visible the young man still kept his

eyes fixed in the direction whence it had disappeared. For upwards of an hour he remained, as if rooted to the spot, where he had heard the last whispered adieu of Annette, and could scarcely even yet acknowledge to himself that she had departed, perhaps for ever. It was but yesterday that the first intimation of their immediate separation had been made to him, and now, what he so much dreaded had come to pass, and he was indeed alone. What would he not have given to live over again the last three weeks—to have Annette once more by his side, showing in her every word and look all the fond confidingness of woman! How many things he had to say to her which he had till now forgotten! He had thought too much of glory and too little of love—oh, that he could see her again but for one brief instant, if only to assure her how little he regarded the promptings of ambition when compared with her affection! But she was gone, and henceforth nought remained for him but unavailing regret. The sun of his hopes was set, and gloom encompassed him round. Years might pass ere they should again meet, and perhaps that meeting might not take place till age had ploughed wrinkles in the brows of both, and adversity chilled the finer feelings of their souls.

As Alphonse thus stood absorbed in thoughts of deepest melancholy, a footstep approached, and a hand was laid lightly on his shoulder. He turned, and beheld Charette!

CHAPTER IV.

CHARETTE took no notice of Alphonse's visible embarrassment, but, in explanation of his unexpected presence, observed: "I have been examining the defences of the island, and the state of the garrison which I left here a short while since; and on my way back, beholding you here alone, I came to make you an offer of accompanying me to Machecoul. How say you? Shall we return together? My boat awaits me at the landing-place, and as the wind has chopped right round since the morning, we shall have a quick sail back."

"I will accompany you with pleasure," replied Alphonse, making an effort to rally his spirits, "for the object which brought me here is accomplished, and I have nothing further to detain me in the island."

"You have been taking leave of the friends you

spoke to me of, yesterday, I presume," said Charette, when they had taken their places in the boat.

"I have so," rejoined Alphonse, "and as they are friends such as I never again can expect to meet with, you may imagine that the pang of separation is no light one."

"I can understand your feelings," remarked the General, "if I can no longer fully sympathize with them. The truth is, the age of emotion has passed with me, and I thank God for it; for what is quick and keen sensibility but an *ignis-fatuus*, which, like the marsh-lights of the Sèvre Noirtaise, is constantly leading honest folks astray?"

Charette said this with bitterness, as though suddenly touched by some painful and humiliating reminiscence; he instantly corrected himself, however, and proceeded in a gayer tone, as follows: "I remember some years ago, when I served in the navy, how deeply I felt the loss of an old messmate who had received unexpected orders to join a squadron in the American waters. We had been cronies for many a long year, and had fought side by side in more than one battle, so that when I lost him, I felt as if I had lost my right arm. A few days afterwards we had a sharp fight with an English frigate, and in the excitement of the moment away went my grief, and I soon forgot all about my dear friend. And such will be your

case, when once again you are engaged in active service, for there is nothing like stirring occupation to heal wounds such as yours, which after all are but skin-deep."

"You seem to have no great faith in friendship," observed Alphonse.

"I have quite as much as is necessary for all rational purposes," replied Charette, "and I believe that man is capable of the most friendly actions, provided they do not materially interfere with his own self-interests. Nevertheless, it is to himself, that each individual must look for support in trouble, and safety in the hour of danger. To lean upon others is, in the majority of cases, to lean upon a reed that will give way beneath the slightest pressure."

"I cannot agree with you," said Alphonse, whom the worldly style of Charette's conversation forcibly reminded of the Count de Sevrac.

"Perhaps not," rejoined the General; "but the time will assuredly come when you will think as I do. Believe me, Monsieur de Chatillon, love and friendship are mere youthful impulses, pleasant while they last, and possessing an intoxicating power over the mind, but soon to be succeeded by sterner and manlier considerations—ambition, for instance, which he who knows not, knows nothing of the noblest motive that can sway humanity. Now do not look so grave, for I have no wish

to speak irreverently either of love or friendship. The one is a pretty toy wherewith to amuse one's leisure, and the other is a convenient instrument for self-interest to work with ; and it is the part of a wise man, who would win renown in the world's eye, to concede to each, just its fitting influence, and no more."

The conversation was continued pretty much in this strain, till the little sailing-boat entered the river ; when Alphonse, being anxious to change it, for it jarred strangely on his feelings, softened as they were by his recent separation, began to talk of the prospects of the republicans, and was much struck and not a little hurt by the absence of all lofty patriotic principle that characterized his companion's remarks on the subject. Though he inveighed in ardent terms against the enemy, yet he speculated on their movements as a mere soldier of fortune might be supposed to do, without reference to the nature of the cause in which they were engaged. He seemed, in fact, to have no deep-rooted, conscientious hostility to their views ; and to be a royalist, only because it suited his own views of personal aggrandizement, or because he felt himself compromized with the Republic beyond the hope of redemption. Of all the French soldiers who figured during this stormy period, Charette was the one who bore the closest resemblance to Napoleon.

“ You were present, I believe, at the capture of Thouars,” resumed the General.

“ Yes, I had the good fortune to take part in that assault, and care not how soon I am again in active service,” exclaimed Alphonse, with true military ardour.

Charette regarded him with much complacency, as he replied :

“ Bravely spoken, my young friend ; you look now as a soldier should look, whose whole soul is wrapped up in his profession. Such is the spirit that achieves undying glory ; and without it, a man may toil on in obscurity throughout his life, for war brooks no divided allegiance.”

“ Yet a soldier, to be successful, need not be inaccessible to the softer emotions,” said Alphonse ; “ the claims of humanity may be respected even in the fiercest shock of battle.”

“ Oh, as to that,” replied the General, with edifying *sang-froid*, “ I grant you there are times and seasons when humanity is good policy, as I have found in the case of Machecoul, whose situation as a rallying-point for my troops, in case of reverses, has made it my interest to conciliate the inhabitants by a show of courtesy and kindness ; but humanity without some such propelling motive is sheer weakness. See what have been its effects as regards the King ! He has fallen a victim to nothing else but his reluctance to spill a few drops

of rabble blood on the night of the 10th of August.”

Alphonse here mentioned the circumstance of his having been by the King’s side, on the terrible night in question, which led to several eager inquiries by Charette, who, after listening attentively to his account of the proceedings at the palace on that occasion, and bestowing high praise on the Count de Sevrac—who, he observed, appeared to him to be the only one of his Majesty’s advisers with a head on his shoulders—went on to remark that, in all cases where the mob was brought into direct collision with the ruling powers, that party who showed the greatest promptitude and decision never failed to gain the day.

In the midst of this conversation the boat reached Machecoul, when Charette, with more courtesy than he usually evinced to those with whom he associated, invited Alphonse to take up his quarters with him while he remained in the town, observing with a smile, that the society of a comrade might help to divert his mind after his separation from his friends. The young man gladly accepted this invitation, and they walked on arm-in-arm, the soldiers, as they passed, saluting their commander in the most respectful manner, which he acknowledged only by a grave and distant obeisance.

Just as they entered the street where Charette’s quarters were situated, a crowd at the further end

of it attracted their notice, and presently they heard loud cries of “Where’s the General?”

Charette’s quick penetration readily divined the cause of this tumult, and a cloud gathered over his brow as he advanced towards the mob, who were dragging along a royalist soldier, and overwhelming him with all sorts of reproaches, while several of his comrades—and among them the officer who had been intrusted with the task of maintaining order in the town—were vainly endeavouring to expostulate with the excited citizens.

At the sight of his General, the officer, bustling forward, accompanied by an elderly respectable citizen, was about entering into an explanation, when his companion anticipated him, by exclaiming, in agitated tones :

“ General, I demand justice at your hands—justice for one of the most flagrant and unprovoked outrages that can be inflicted on an unoffending family—”

“ State your complaint, Monsieur,” said Charette, cutting short his exordium, “ and if it be well-founded you shall have justice.”

“ That fellow there,” continued the citizen, pointing to the royalist soldier, “ entered my shop about an hour since, in a state of beastly intoxication, and being foiled in an attempt at robbery, by my wife and daughter, who watched him from an inner room, he assaulted them both with the most savage ferocity, and Heaven knows what might have been the

result of his violence, if I had not luckily entered, and called on my neighbours to assist me in apprehending him. Those of his comrades whom the uproar had drawn to the spot have been urging us to leave the matter in their hands—”

“With a view, I suppose, to screen the culprit?” said Charette, darting a look of displeasure at the officer.

“Not so, General,” replied that individual, “for it was my full intention to have put him under arrest; but these worthy citizens would not listen to my request, that he should be given into my keeping, but insisted on having him brought before you.”

Charette here motioned to his captors to bring forward the prisoner, and then addressed him as follows:

“You are accused, fellow, of two of the greatest crimes that a soldier can possibly commit: disobedience of orders—of the positive orders I issued, that none of the citizens should be molested—and brutal drunkenness, under whose influence you have descended to play the part of a common thief! Are these charges true?”

“It is the first time I ever attempted to commit a robbery, and I should not have done so if I had been in my right senses,” said the prisoner, whom the shame of his exposure had now quite sobered.

“Have you nothing better to urge in your

defence than that you were drunk ?" exclaimed the General.

"Nothing," was the dogged reply, "except that I was foremost in pursuit when our detachment routed the republicans near Azenai."

"I know you to be a brave man," said Charette, with a touch of regret and sadness in his accents, "but that is no justification of your present conduct."

"He is as brave a fellow as any in the regiment," interposed one of his comrades, eagerly.

"And I myself," remarked another, "saw him cut down three republicans with his own hands before the gates at Machecoul."

Charette took no notice of this interruption, but seemed absorbed in thought; at length, after a few minutes' pause, he said, in those firm, calm tones, which denote inflexibility of purpose:

"I am sorry, deeply sorry for you, prisoner; but were you my own brother, I could not, and would not, overlook such a flagrant breach of discipline and honesty as you have this day committed." Then turning to the officer in command, he added: "Lead him away, and let him be hanged within the hour to the nearest tree!"

"Hanged!" exclaimed the prisoner, clasping his hands in agony, "give me at least a soldier's death —let me be shot by my comrades, and not hanged by them like a dog."

“Yours, fellow,” replied the General, “was not a soldier’s but a ruffian’s crime.”

“Will not imprisonment and degradation answer the purpose of punishment better than death?” exclaimed Alphonse, making a humane effort to save the culprit’s life.

“No!” was Charette’s terse, decided answer.

There was here a slight murmur of surprize and dissatisfaction among the soldiers, which, however, was immediately checked, when the General shouted in tones that rung out like a trumpet :

“Silence, on your lives! And do you, Captain Bernier, come and report to me the instant the sentence is carried into execution. And now, citizens, be pleased to depart peaceably, each man to his own home; and rely on it, that while I remain here, your lives and properties shall be rigidly protected.”

The mob immediately dispersed, with loud cries of “Vive Charette!” and the General and Alphonse resumed their walk in silence to the former’s quarters.

“I would have given something to have saved that man’s life,” said Charette, as they were seated together soon afterwards at a late dinner, “for he was a brave and skilful soldier; but it was manifestly impossible.”

“Surely the power to save him was in your hands!” observed Alphonse.

“No, I was not a free agent in the matter,” replied Charette, emphatically; “had I consulted my own feelings, I should for ever have lost the confidence of the citizens, whom it is absolutely necessary that I should conciliate, for Machecoul is the key to our position at Noirmoutier; and so long as I retain it in my hands, I need fear little for the safety of the garrison there. But this I could not calculate on, were the town once to distrust my professions of good-will, which they are the more disposed to do, inasmuch as not a few of them have a secret leaning towards republicanism. However, I think I have now fully convinced them of my sincerity.”

“You have indeed given them a terrible proof of it,” said Alphonse, significantly.

“Bah!” exclaimed Charette, “you regard this matter in too serious a light. What is the loss of one man’s life compared with the secure possession of an important post like Machecoul, on which depend the lives of thousands? I have but anticipated the work of the bullet or the broadsword by a few years, perhaps a few months.”

“You reconcile yourself more easily than I could do to an act of—” the speaker here paused, as if hunting about for a fitting word, and then added, “of rigid severity.”

“Young man,” said Charette, with earnestness, “a good soldier can reconcile himself to anything

but the loss of a battle, or the consciousness of neglect of duty."

At this moment the officer, who had been intrusted with the superintendence of the execution, entered the room, pursuant to orders, and made his report that the sentence had been fully carried into effect, and that all was over !

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Charette, shrugging his shoulders, "I am sorry for him, but necessity has no law. Captain Bernier, you will take care to see that the patrols are all at their appointed posts, and that the sentinels are doubled at the eastern gate. It is now nearly eight o'clock ; within the hour I shall make the rounds myself. De Chatillon, be good enough to pass me the bottle near you. No, not that, but the champagne on your left hand ; I have but an indifferent head for the strong wines of Nantes."

All this was said with perfect composure, and without the slightest change of voice and manner ; nor did the speaker make any further allusion to the fate of the poor wretch who had expiated his offences by death. He seemed, indeed, to have dismissed the matter altogether from his mind immediately the officer had quitted the room, and discussed a variety of unimportant topics in his usual caustic, worldly style, until the time arrived which he had appointed for his tour of inspection, when he set forth, accompanied, at his special request, by Alphonse.

As they strolled through the town, the young man was not a little surprized at the order which everywhere prevailed. Though the main street was crowded, and groups of soldiers off duty were constantly passing and repassing, yet there was not the slightest symptom of noise or disturbance ; but the shops were all open, and the tradespeople pursued their ordinary avocations with as much *non-chalance* as if they had not been subjected, a day or two previously, to the horrors of an assault. From the existing aspect of things, no one could have imagined that Machecoul had so recently changed masters, and was now in possession of a royalist force.

“ This is a cheering sight to a soldier situated as I am,” observed Charette ; “ the confidence and good-will of these people are worth a dozen regiments to me.”

While he thus expressed himself on the subject nearest to his heart, they approached the eastern gate, where the General had ordered the number of sentinels to be doubled. When they had got within a few yards of it, they could distinctly hear a group of five or six soldiers, whose backs were turned towards them, talking with the sentinels, who were pacing to and fro, on the subject of the recent execution, which they described, in no measured terms, as an act of unjustifiable cruelty.

“ Ha ! is this the way they canvass an act of

mine?" exclaimed Charette, and with a bold, rapid stride, he advanced into the midst of the group.

Immediately the soldiers recognized him they dropped the conversation, and turned confused and uneasy glances first at the General, and then at each other.

"Soldiers," exclaimed Charette, with a grim, ironical smile, "when you next pass an opinion on the conduct of your General, let me recommend you to adopt a lower tone, or you may chance to be overheard when least you expect it."

Unable, in the embarrassment of the moment, to devise any plausible answer, the men discreetly maintained silence, on which their commander went on to say :

"You spoke in so loud a voice that I was compelled, in spite of myself, to overhear you. But do not be alarmed, for you have said nothing that I cannot easily forgive. The case might have been different had I allowed you to proceed without interruption; but I have no wish to play the part of a listener, nor to lay undue stress upon trifling matters which were never intended to reach my ear."

Somewhat reassured by this language, one of the soldiers observed: "We were merely speaking, General, of the poor fellow who was executed this evening, and regretting his fate."

"And I, too, regret it; more perhaps than you

do," replied Charette; "but this is wandering from the point. Henceforth, let me advise you to confine yourselves to the discharge of your own duties, and not pass your opinion upon acts, the propriety of which it is not very likely you should understand. You will now please to return to your respective quarters—such of you, at least, as are not on duty; and as for you," here he addressed himself to the sentinels, "bear in mind that a silent, as well as a strict watch, is expected of you."

The General accompanied these words with a haughty inclination of the head, and then replacing his arm within that of Alphonse, who had been a quiet, but not uninterested spectator of the above scene, he withdrew; and after visiting one or two more posts, went back to his quarters.

Soon after day-break next morning, while Alphonse was lying fast asleep in bed, dreaming of Annette, and of his last parting with her on the shore of Noirmoutier, he was abruptly roused by a loud knocking at his door; and on inquiring into the cause of the disturbance, he found that it was a message from Charette, who had sent up one of his aides-de-camp, with a request that he would descend immediately, as he had news of moment to communicate to him.

Hastily dressing himself, De Chatillon went down to the General, who was standing among

several officers of his staff, holding an open letter in his hand, and conversing with a courier, whose clothes were covered with mud, and whose countenance bore all the marks of exhaustion, arising from a long and fatiguing night journey.

On seeing Alphonse, Charette exclaimed, with more vivacity than was his wont: "Rare news, De Chatillon! The threatened republican reinforcements have come at last! and not less than forty thousand men, horse and foot, have arrived at Saumur, as I learn by this letter from D'Elbée, who dispatched it yesterday from Fontenay, where he has reassembled a large force, and is daily expecting to be joined again by the other Seigneurs who had quitted him before this intelligence was known."

"These are, indeed, stirring tidings!" exclaimed Alphonse; "but does the General know for a fact that these reinforcements have arrived, or does he report it on mere hearsay?"

"He reports it," replied Charette, "on the authority of an officer of Hussars, who has quitted the enemy's ranks and joined him, from disgust at the measures of extermination projected by Westermann, the Commander-in-chief."

"Then, doubtless, some of Westermann's plans have been revealed to D'Elbée," observed Alphonse.

"They have so," rejoined Charette; "it seems

by the hussar's statement, that while one republican division is to push forward into the Bocage, with a view to regain possession of the captured towns, another is to reinforce the garrisons at Angers and Nantes, and a third is to make a sweeping irruption into the Marais, of course, in the hope of retaking Machecoul and the Isle of Noirmoutier. So you see, De Chatillon, I shall have plenty of work on my hands shortly."

"Ay, this is news that will set us all to work in right earnest!" exclaimed Alphonse, "and rouse every spark of patriotism that may be still slumbering in La Vendée."

"But this is not all," continued Charette: "D'Elbée further states that General Chantereau, who is third in command under Westermann—"

"Chantereau!" interrupted Alphonse, with an agitation of voice and manner that drew on him the eyes of every officer in the apartment.

"Yes, Chantereau," repeated Charette. "Do you know the man?"

"I know him well—too well!" replied Alphonse; "for he has already twice attempted my life, and each time under circumstances that reflect indelible disgrace on him, both as a man and a soldier. The fellow is a mere cowardly, treacherous assassin, who will not hesitate to stab in the dark the enemy whom he dare not meet, face to face, in broad daylight! I heard, when in Paris,

that he was about to take the command of a division in La Vendée ; but as the information came from himself, I paid not the slightest attention to it. And to think that such a poltroon should be raised to the rank of a General !”

“ It is true, nevertheless,” said Charette ; “ and the very day before the hussar officer, of whom I have been speaking, quitted the republicans, this Chantereau had proposed to open the campaign by surprizing your father’s château, at the head of a small corps, formed of the *élite* of his division.”

“ What ! is this the ruffian’s project ?” exclaimed Alphonse, abruptly.

“ Hear me out,” resumed Charette. “ At the time this proposition was made, it was considered doubtful whether Chantereau would be able to carry it into execution ; for Westermann was anxious that he should not waste a moment in such petty assaults, but push directly forward to Brésuire and Thouars. Moreover, the officer states—”

“ I care not what the officer states !” interrupted Alphonse, passionately ; “ but this I know, that a vindictive wretch like Chantereau will not be diverted from his purpose by one Westermann, or a thousand Westermanns. He has vowed the ruin of our house, and he will keep that oath, no matter at what risk to the cause he espouses. No doubt he is by this time, in full march for the château, if he have not already reached it ! And, gracious God ! suppose my father should be unprepared for the assault !”

“ I think it far more likely,” suggested Charette, “ that the Marquis has quitted the château, and is on his way to rejoin D’Elbée.”

“ No, no,” returned Alphonse, hastily; “ he is still there, reassembling and organizing his retainers, which is not done in a day.”

“ And you propose to set out immediately to his assistance ?” asked Charette.

“ This instant !” replied Alphonse; “ but not alone, for my single sword could be of no avail. General Charette, you know what I would ask—furnish me, I implore you, with the means of beating back this blood-thirsty ruffian and his gang of cut-throats ! A hundred stout, well-armed men, is all I require. Surely, you will not refuse me ! Consider that the life of my father is at stake!—and that if he, one of the bravest and most powerful of our Seigneurs, should fall a victim to the malice of such a fiend as Chantereau—Oh, God ! the bare supposition of such a catastrophe almost drives me frantic !”

“ Gentlemen,” said Charette, turning composedly to his staff, who had hitherto taken no part in this conversation, “ if I mistake not, Fleuriot’s detachment was to rejoin us to-night from Azenai ?”

“ So I understood,” replied one of the officers; “ and as that neighbourhood is cleared for the present of the republicans, we may reckon with certainty on his arrival to-night or to-morrow at furthest.”

“Then, in that case,” said the General, “I think I may venture to diminish the strength of my garrison here. It is not a very discreet step though, for our numbers are but small, and we know not how soon we may have the enemy pouring down on us from Nantes. You have seen to the safe custody of the prisoners, Allard, as I directed, so that there is no chance of an outbreak—”

“We need fear nothing on that score, General,” replied the officer addressed, “so long as bolts, bars, and sentinels are faithful to their trust.”

“Enough, Sir,” rejoined Charette. “Now go directly, and summon eighty or a hundred of the best men in your troop, and bid them be prepared to set out, within the hour, with M. de Chatillon.”

Punctual to the time appointed, upwards of four score well-armed cavalry soldiers dashed up the street, and halted opposite the house where Charette had taken up his quarters. The General immediately put them under the command of Alphonse, directed them to hurry forward with all possible expedition, and to return to Machecoul the instant they had accomplished the object for which they were brought together. He then accommodated the young Seigneur with a horse belonging to one of his own aides-de-camp; and everything being in readiness for departure, the bugle sounded, and off went the detachment, scouring through the town like a whirlwind.

CHAPTER V.

IT is the privilege of story-tellers to make, like chess-players, a retrograde move, whenever they may deem it essential to the interests of their narrative ; and availing ourselves of this undisputed privilege, we shall leave Alphonse and his troop to pursue their route to the Marquis de Chatillon's château, while we return to that point in our tale, at which we lost sight of the Seigneurs and their victorious army. We left them, it may be remembered, at the moment when they were setting out from Thouars for Parthenay, of which last town they gained possession with little difficulty, for the republicans who occupied it were few in number, and being hastily got together and ill-provided with the means of defence, they made little more than a show of opposition, and then retreated to Fontenay, where there was already a numerous garrison amply furnished with ammu-

nition, and prepared for the approach of the royalists.

After capturing Parthenay, the Seigneurs marched without loss of time on Fontenay. Their dispositions, however, were ill-made, and though De Lescure and his cousin, Henri de Larochejaquelein, who commanded the left wing of the army, contrived to reach the faubourgs of the town, after having given the enemy a sharp repulse, yet the right wing and centre were, early in the action, thrown into complete confusion ; the artillery by some unaccountable mismanagement got crowded together, in a place where it could be of little or no use ; and—worst disaster of all !—that old-fashioned piece of cannon, Marie-Jeanne, which the peasants regarded with quite a superstitious reverence, was taken, despite the desperate efforts of Cathelineau and his detachment to keep possession of it.

Disheartened by this unexpected stroke of ill-fortune, many of the peasants flung down their arms and fled ; while those who remained, fought with such an evident want of alacrity, that their leaders, greatly to their mortification, were constrained to sound a retreat ; and accordingly they fell back on Parthenay, carrying off with them a small portion of their artillery which Stofflet had succeeded in rescuing from the enemy.

The first endeavours of the Seigneurs on reach-

ing Parthenay were directed to restoring the courage and confidence of their soldiers, with which view they had recourse, at D'Elbée's suggestion, to the priests, who addressed them in terms well calculated to rekindle all their martial and patriotic ardour. Agents were next dispatched into the neighbouring villages to collect recruits, and a numerous corps having by these means been again got together, the army, after a few days' halt, set forth once more for Fontenay, where they found a large body of republicans drawn up in battle array under the walls of the town.

“Now, my friends,” said the Marquis de Châtillon, “remember, we must this day retrieve our lost honour, and recover Marie-Jeanne;” and putting himself at the head of his division, he charged with such impetuosity, that he broke right through the enemy's ranks, who quickly closing round him, he would most certainly have been cut off, together with every man of his detachment, had not Henri, seeing the imminent peril of his situation, dashed forward at the head of the cavalry to his assistance. After a short but sanguinary struggle, the troops of the Marquis and his young friend succeeded in putting to flight one entire division; the battle, however, was not yet won, for the large corps, which D'Elbée commanded in person, was twice repulsed by the furious cannonading kept up against it, and the

men could with difficulty be induced to continue the combat. At this critical moment, Cathelineau and Stofflet, whose detachment had not yet come into action, gave the word to advance. On swept the brave peasants with the fury of a winter torrent ; but when they got within a hundred yards or so of the enemy, they perceived a Curé, who had accompanied the Generals on their march, standing alone, as if absorbed in prayer, with an uplifted crucifix in his hand. In an instant, the whole body had halted and thrown themselves on their knees, before the sacred emblem, which so annoyed Stofflet that he exclaimed furiously : “ Up, men, up ! we are not monks or friars, but soldiers !”

“ Let them kneel !” said the Curé, emphatically. “ I know the temper of their minds better than you do.”

“ The Curé says rightly,” added Cathelineau. “ Don’t interrupt them, the delay will be but momentary, and they will fight all the better for having discharged, what they deem, a sacred duty.”

It was even as he said. The men knelt but for a moment, to receive the priest’s blessing ; and then, as if they had derived new strength and ardour of spirit from this unpremeditated act of devotion, they rushed upon the enemy, already half-vanquished, and decided the fortune of the day.

This victory was the most brilliant that the royalist forces had yet achieved. It gave them possession of the principal town in the department, procured them an abundant supply of ammunition of all kinds, and by throwing Marie-Jeanne once again into their hands, confirmed the peasants in the flattering delusion—which their chiefs adroitly encouraged—that henceforth the progress of their arms would be irresistible.

Immediately after the battle, the same scene was repeated which had occasioned so much amusement at Thouars. The prisoners—with the exception of the superior officers, who were courteously offered their parole—were cropped close, by experienced practitioners, and then sent about their business; and when this grotesque operation was completed, the Vendéan soldiers, whom no inducements could keep for any length of time from their homes, returned by hundreds to their respective districts, so that within twenty-four hours from the time of their entering, the Generals were left with a force barely sufficient to serve the purposes of an ordinary garrison. Unable, in consequence, to undertake any further expedition of moment, they confined themselves, during the three days the majority of them remained in the town, to devising means for the establishment of an efficient commissariat; and they were busy discussing these important matters, when news was

brought them by a trusty royalist from Paris, that the legislature had sent forth a large republican reinforcement, under the command of Westermann.

Under these circumstances, it became necessary that an army, more powerful than any that had yet taken the field, should be got together with as little delay as possible; and accordingly the chiefs departed, each to his own locality, to collect recruits, arms, stores, and all that might be requisite for the provisioning of a large force; while D'Elbée remained behind in command at Fontenay, in order to open a communication with Charette and his colleagues in the Marais.

It was on the morning of the third day, after the capture of the town, that the Marquis de Chatillon, accompanied by about a dozen of his most attached followers, took his departure for his château. Notwithstanding the recent glorious successes of the royalist arms, the Seigneur's mind —as indeed it had been for some days previously —was filled with the gloomiest surmises respecting the fate of his son, whose protracted absence, considering the important mission with which he had been intrusted, he could only account for by supposing that he had been discovered and arrested by the enemy, and was now either languishing in prison or had been put to death as a traitor to the Republic. The other chiefs who had been equally astonished at Alphonse's long delay, had done all

they could to comfort the afflicted father, but such consolation as they could offer was anything but satisfactory, for not a man among them but was internally convinced that the unlucky messenger had been waylaid and put to death. Henri and his cousin, in particular, had fully made up their minds that such was the case, for they were well aware of the merciless rigour with which the majority of the republican commanders treated such royalists as might happen to fall into their hands. On taking leave of the Marquis, however, his brother chiefs all promised him that they would institute the speediest inquiries in all directions; and D'Elbée added that he would send off another courier to Charette, and hoped that on his return to Fontenay he should be able to give him cheering tidings respecting the truant.

Of course, on the Seigneur's arrival at the château, the first inquiries of his *maître-d'hôtel*, Pierre, were made after his young master, and greatly was the honest fellow shocked when informed of his unaccountable disappearance.

“ Yet I don't think they can have murdered him ! ” said the solemn Pierre, by way of comforting the Marquis: “ wretches as they are, I cannot think that they have proceeded to such lengths.”

“ Murdered him ! ” said the Seigneur, shuddering as he repeated his servant's words.

“ I did not mean that,” replied the *maître-d’hôtel*: “ it must not—cannot be.”

“ Alas !” said the Marquis, despondingly, “ what atrocity is there that the republicans would hesitate to commit ? My poor Alphonse ! Would to God that I had been the victim instead ! That it had been the old, blighted tree, that had been cut down, instead of the young and thriving plant. Had you but seen him at Thouars, Pierre, you would never have forgotten the heroism of his conduct ;” and melted by this recollection of his son’s bravery, the father covered his face with his hands, and after a vain effort to conceal the workings of his nature, threw himself into a chair, and in the pathetic language of Scripture, “ lifted up his voice and wept.”

Respecting the sacredness of his master’s sorrows, the *maître-d’hôtel*, for a few minutes, maintained perfect silence ; at length when the paroxysm had in some degree exhausted itself, he ventured, in the bitterness of his feelings, half-unconscious that he was overheard, to murmur something like an expression of regret, that the Seigneur had been so lenient in his treatment of the prisoners whom he had made after his first successful engagement on the high road to Nantes.

“ You are right,” exclaimed the Marquis, abruptly starting up and pacing the room with hasty strides ; “ you are right, Pierre, quite right ;

I was indeed too lenient with the wretches whom I had within my grasp, and now I am punished for my inconsiderate clemency. But I will show mercy no longer. For every pang I have been made to suffer, a republican shall pay the forfeit of his life. The fields of the Bocage shall be covered with the corpses of the ruffians; its streams shall run red with their heart's best blood. Not a widowed mother, nor childless father in La Vendée, but shall hear and rejoice in my revenge. Pierre, let the tocsin at daybreak be rung in all the parishes. Let my retainers from every quarter be summoned hither without delay. No excuse shall serve—all must come. Away—away!" and he pushed the valet to the door.

Pursuant to the Marquis's commands, messages were dispatched in all directions, to summon the peasants to assemble in arms within three days, on the adjacent uplands of Lavallière; and the instant they made their appearance at the place of rendezvous, the Seigneur putting them under the command of one of his most trusted officers, a substantial farmer in the district, ordered them to march with all speed to Fontenay, having heard that a large republican force had reached Saumur, and concluding that its first attempts would be directed to the recovery of the captured towns.

When his troops had set forth on their expedition, the Marquis, who had gone among them to

inflame their zeal and courage by his exhortations, returned to the château, intending to set out for Fontenay, the moment the courier returned, whom he had dispatched on horseback in the direction of Saumur, with instructions to glean all the information he could, respecting the number and movements of the enemy.

The courier had been three days absent, on his secret and difficult mission, and the Seigneur was in hourly expectation of his return, when his *maître-d'hôtel* rushed into his presence, open-mouthed, with the startling intelligence, that a body of republican cavalry, about a hundred strong, had been seen halting at a village about ten miles off; and that one or two of the inhabitants, suspecting that their destination was the château, had hastily flung themselves on horseback, and hurried off at full speed, to communicate the disastrous tidings.

The Marquis was thunderstruck by this news. “God of Heaven!” he exclaimed, “can this be possible? Ten miles off, say you! Then by this time they must be close upon us! Oh, fool—fool, to think that I should not have foreseen the probability of such a surprize, and retained sufficient men for the defence of the château.”

“We have still twelve able-bodied, well-armed men on whom we can rely,” observed Pierre.

“Twelve!” replied his master. “What can

twelve do against a hundred? But no matter, the attempt must be made. Go, Pierre, and summon the household here instantly; lock up all the women in the cellars—anywhere, so that they may not embarrass us by their alarms; bar all the doors, and make fast all the lower windows;” and his dauntless spirit rising with the emergency, he added: “ we may yet give the rogues a peppering; and if we must fall, at least we will not fall unrevenged.”

The old *maître-d'hôtel* went off to execute his master’s orders, and presently returned with a rusty fowling-piece which, as he grimly observed, he had not handled for years, and a huge sword not much less venerable from its antiquity. He was accompanied by about a dozen of the Marquis’s retainers whom, since the commencement of the civil war, he usually kept about his person, as a sort of staff or body-guard. There was an air of pompous dignity in Pierre’s manner, as he marched in at the head of this little band, with a long, solemn stride, which would fain have been heroic if it could, that at another time would have greatly diverted his master, but now his mind was too full of graver and more important considerations, to enable him to enjoy a laugh at his unconscious domestic’s expense.

While the Marquis was posting his household at the different spots whence they might fire down

on the enemy, with as little exposure as possible of their own persons, several tenants who rented farms in his immediate neighbourhood, and whose advanced age had prevented them from accompanying the other peasants on their march, came in, armed with fowling-pieces, so that in a short time a force was collected of about thirty men.

“ Now, then,” said the Marquis, when all his preparations were completed; “ now we may be able to give the wretches such a reception as they deserve. But what have you done with the women, Pierre ?”

“ I have them all safe under lock and key, in the underground large cellar,” replied Pierre composedly.

“ Pleasant quarters enough !” said the Seigneur, smiling.

“ Very pleasant indeed,” rejoined Pierre, who had not the slightest idea of a joke, “ except that the cellar is somewhat damp and cold, and festooned with cobwebs. But that is to be expected at this time of the year. Let things come to the worst, I have not much fear of the women being discovered, if their squalling does not betray them.”

“ Ah, but we cannot reckon on their silence when once their feelings are excited,” observed the Marquis.

“ That’s true,” said Pierre; “ for a woman’s tongue always wags most at the moment it should

be most still. However, I have told them, that if they make the slightest noise, their lives will be the consequence; so I think, for once in a way, we may trust to their discretion."

"But what provisions have we, in case the rogues should take a fancy to blockade the château?" inquired the Marquis.

"Not much," rejoined the *maître-d'hôtel*; "but should we be reduced to extremities, there is a capital stock of old shoes in the lumber-room, and the upper-leathers will be all the tenderer for their long wear."

"Oh yes, very digestible no doubt," said the Seigneur, amused by the formal manner in which Pierre made this announcement. "Well, my grandfather, in the course of his military career, made more than one meal off horse-flesh; and I do not see why his grandson should turn up his nose at the idea of dining off shoe-leather!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth, when the republican cavalry, who had dismounted in the neighbourhood, leaving fifty men to watch that no one approached to the assistance of the inhabitants of the château, were seen advancing in a compact body up the avenue, armed with guns, heavy horse-pistols, and huge broadswords.

The instant they came within the proper distance, a destructive fire was poured down on them, which killed some five or six of their number.

Exasperated by this unexpected attack, they dashed tumultuously forward, when a second discharge caused several more men to drop. Chantereau, the officer in command, who with a discreet eye to his own safety, kept in the centre of his troop, instead of boldly heading them, encouraged them, by the prospect of ample plunder, to persevere in the assault, and promised, in the name of Westermann, a handsome gratuity to whoever should secure the person of that arch-royalist and aristocrat, the Marquis de Chatillon.

Animated by the hopes of this reward, the republicans, who had now advanced close up to the door, thundered against it with all their might, thinking to burst it open by sheer dint of physical strength; but the stubborn wood resisted all their fury, while from the windows immediately above them, a heavy fire was maintained with such unflagging spirit as threatened, if much longer continued, to cut them off to a man. But unfortunately, in taking their aim, the garrison were obliged, in some degree, to expose the upper part of their persons at the windows; and this being seen by the enemy in the rear, they fired up with disastrous effect, as was evident from the groans and yells of pain and rage that followed each discharge.

After about a quarter of an hour's furious assault on the door, in which the disadvantage lay with the republicans, who had lost nearly twenty

men, Chantereau gave orders to them to withdraw, in the hope that such an act might be construed into an abandonment of the assault. Instead, however, of retreating from the neighbourhood, he merely changed his point of attack, and when he was out of sight of the besieged, he divided his force into small detachments, and dispatched them to the rear of the château, one party of which he himself headed; while, by way of diverting the attention of the royalists, he ordered the most numerous division to return to their former post in front, and with more show of earnestness than ever, renew the assault in that quarter.

This manœuvre was not wholly unsuccessful. The majority of the besieged confined themselves, by order of the Marquis—who little dreamed of this division of the republicans into separate detachments—to pouring down an incessant fire on the assailants in front; while those who were unable, from age and defect of sight, to take a correct aim, were left to patrol the château with Pierre at their head, whose fowling-piece being of little use in his hands, as he was but an indifferent marksman, he had, at his master's suggestion, resigned it to one more competent to turn it to a good account, and drawn forth his rusty old sword instead, which, in the true professional spirit, he handled as if it had been a carving-knife.

Thus were the besieged occupied, when a tremendous uproar proceeding from the rear of the château, told the fatal truth to the Marquis, that the enemy had at length succeeded in forcing an entrance. In the rear of the premises, as was stated in the earlier portion of this narrative, stood an uncouth, homely pile of offices and out-houses, which were only separated from the château, by a small square yard. In this direction a party of the republicans had made their way, and having quietly stolen across the yard, found nothing to oppose their progress but a narrow door, which in the hurry and confusion of the moment had escaped the recollection of the royalists, and was consequently only secured by the usual slender fastenings. The besiegers hailed this opportune discovery with fierce shouts of exultation, which reaching the ears of the other detachments who were reconnoitring in the rear, they hurried off in the direction whence the sounds came, and the whole force rushed in together, with the exception only of those who, with diminished numbers, still kept up the attack in front.

The Marquis's ears were the first to catch this fatal sound. "The ruffians have effected an entrance!" he exclaimed, in accents of despair. "What now is to be done? Ah, I have it! Quick, friends, to the hall—the hall: let us unbar the door—force the locks, and make a desperate

sortie, and we may perhaps succeed in cutting our way out. Quick—quick ; I hear them coming !”

With lightning speed the Seigneur, and those of his household who had been posted with him at the window, darted down into the hall, whither they were immediately followed by Pierre and the rest of the garrison, who had barely time to assist their comrades in throwing wide the door, when they were all overtaken by the besiegers.

“ Too late !” said the Marquis, gloomily. “ Our last chance of escape is cut off, and now nothing remains but that we die like men, grappling with our fate to the last. Let all who love me, follow me,” and he rushed from the hall into his spacious dining-room, observing : “ Here we can at least make a stand ; for in the hall we should be cooped up and slaughtered like sheep.”

He was accompanied by the entire household, and nearly at the same moment the republicans forced their way into the apartment. A desperate conflict took place, the Seigneur and his retainers fighting with all the phrenzied energy of despair ; and Pierre in particular, despite his usually pacific and methodical turn of mind, enacting, in the intensity of his wrath, such marvels with his sword, as astonished all who saw him. But the struggle was too unequal to last long ; for though many of the enemy fell, yet dozens rushed forward to supply their places, while the Marquis’s followers

kept momently dropping, till at length they were reduced to nearly one-half their original number.

At this crisis Chantereau, who had taken up his position at the door of the dining-room, cried out, in a voice of authority: "No more fighting, men, the victory is already secured; so, forward on the traitors, and disarm them." As he spoke, his soldiers darted forward in one dense mass; and though the foremost among them dropped on the floor, dead men, yet they succeeded in overpowering, disarming, and binding the royalists with cords and bridles, which they had brought with them in anticipation of their victory, and then awaited the further commands of their leader.

While these proceedings were taking place in the *salle à manger* of the château, another party of the republicans were flying from room to room, breaking open chests, drawers, cabinets, &c., and helping themselves unceremoniously to all the valuables they could lay hands on. Having secured a considerable amount of booty, in the shape of money, wearing apparel, and articles of *bijouterie*, they went off to the kitchen, whence they soon returned into their commander's presence, laden with meat, fruits, poultry, bread, and all the materials of an abundant repast.

"Ha! a welcome sight!" exclaimed Chantereau, laying aside his sword and pistols, and seating himself at the head of the table, which his men

were covering with all the viands they could collect from the Marquis's larder. "A welcome sight, faith ! Be seated, my brave fellows—but, ho ! there is no wine ; a feast without wine is but a sorry affair. Marquis de Chatillon," he continued, turning to that nobleman, who stood bound and disarmed near the table, together with the rest of his followers, "will it please you to accommodate us with the keys of your cellar ? We know you sporting Seigneurs are fond of the juice of the grape, and choice in your vintage."

This was said in a tone of bitter, insulting mockery ; but as the Seigneur disdained to reply further than by a contemptuous glance at the speaker, while Pierre grimly whispered that he wished he had taken the precaution to poison all the wine, Chantereau observed to his men : "Our host is inhospitable, and I fear we shall be reduced to the somewhat uncourteous alternative of helping ourselves. Go, a party of you, to the cellar, and bring back all the bottles you can find."

Some five or six of his men immediately flew off to execute their commander's orders ; others took their seats at the festive board, and began attacking the provisions with all the rapacity of famished wolves, while a heap of dead bodies lay strewed about them ; a third party, by Chantereau's directions, kept a vigilant guard over the prisoners, as if even, in that defenceless state, they were

dangerous ; and a fourth, with whom eating and drinking were apparently secondary considerations compared with the opportunity of plunder, rambled over every part of the château, diligently gleaning such waifs and strays as might have escaped their predecessors' research.

A few minutes after the men, who had been dispatched in quest of the wine, had quitted the room, a tremendous din was heard, as if doors were being forcibly broken open, and presently there rose the shrill screams of women.

“The villains have discovered the women’s hiding-place !” exclaimed Pierre, turning a glance of horror and agony on his master, who stood next him.

“God help the poor creatures !” replied the Seigneur, in tones of the deepest anguish.

On first hearing the screams, Chantereau had started up from the table, as if in apprehension of a rescue ; but the *maître-d’hôtel’s* exclamation reassured him, and he said, with a malignant smile : “What, women too ! Why, this is better still. And if they be but young and handsome —hey, Marquis de Chatillon, you should be a judge of female beauty !—we will help them to likelier sweethearts than they could hope to find in this barbarous district.”

“Wretches !” exclaimed the Seigneur, vainly endeavouring to shake himself free of his cords ;

“would you outrage innocent and defenceless women?”

“Compose yourself, my Lord Marquis,” replied the commander, sneeringly; “for be assured that you, at least, shall not live to see them outraged.”

A party of about half-a-dozen females here rushed in, breathless from haste and terror; and they were closely followed by several republicans, bearing in their hands bottles of wine and drinking-cups.

Chantereau immediately seized one of the bottles, and knocking off the neck, helped himself to a full goblet of wine, which he drained at a draught—anxious, apparently, to screw himself up to a certain point of reckless effrontery, while his soldiers followed his example, casting every now and then sundry insolent looks at the poor women, who had flown in a body to the prisoners, where they stood trembling like aspen-leaves, and imploring the protection of those who had no longer power to befriend them.

“My poor Victorine!” said Pierre, the tears dropping fast from his eyes, as he witnessed the distracted condition of the young girl who clung convulsively to his side:

“Oh, fear not for her, old man,” replied Chantereau, with a brutal laugh, “she shall be well cared for, if I myself undertake the office of protector. By my soul, she is a likely wench enough;

and though I will not promise her a husband, yet I will furnish her with a very devoted lover, while the sentimental fit lasts. Yes, my pretty Victorine, you and I must be better acquainted. Now don't look so shy, my sweet one; you know not what good fortune is in store for you!"

A roar of laughter followed this coarse sally, while the wretched girl who was the object of it, wrung her hands, and burst into a violent fit of hysterical sobbing; which, instead of exciting the pity, only increased the mirth of the republicans, who indulged in several gross jests at her expense, which they seasoned with copious draughts of wine.

"Men—if men indeed you be, and not, rather, fiends from the lowest depths of hell," exclaimed the indignant Marquis, "cease this atrocious language! And you, Monsieur," turning to the republican leader, "permit but these women to quit the château unharmed, and my gold, my lands, everything I have, even my life itself, are at your disposal."

"All are mine already," replied Chantereau, coldly, "so you may spare yourself any further supplications."

"And the women are ours by right of conquest," added one of the soldiers; "and no power on earth shall induce us to surrender our hard-won prizes."

"Until they are fairly worn out in our service,"

said another ; “ and then perhaps we may make them a present of their lives and liberties.”

“ Enough of this foolery,” exclaimed Chantereau. “ And now to the important business of the evening : Marquis de Chatillon, do you know in whose presence you stand at this moment ?” and he flung himself back in his chair, and fixed his glance full on the prisoner.

“ I know that I am standing in the presence of a ruffian and a coward, and that is all I care to know,” replied the Seigneur, with contemptuous *nonchalance*.

“ Look at me well,” continued the republican commander, “ and tell me if I remind you of—”

“ You remind me forcibly of an Angola baboon, that I once saw in the Royal Gardens at Paris,” said the Marquis.

This sally occasioned another roar of laughter, which so annoyed Chantereau, that he exclaimed, grinding his teeth with passion : “ Wretch ! have you no recollection of the insulted, the persecuted, the dishonoured Chantereau ?”

“ Chantereau !” replied the Marquis, thrown off his guard by the agitation this hated name awakened. “ You, Chantereau ? Impossible ! That villain perished by the justest and truest blow ever dealt by the hand of woman.”

“ ‘Tis false !” exclaimed the republican leader ;

“ that villain, as you call him, still lives—is here before you : I am Chantereau !”

“ You, Chantereau ?” repeated the Marquis, bewildered with excess of astonishment.

“ Yes, I am that Chantereau, who, by your means, lost rank, station, character, influence—everything that man holds most dear !”

“ Miscreant !” said the Marquis, “ do you forget the cause you gave me for such animosity ?”

“ I care nothing for the cause,” rejoined Chantereau ; “ I bear in mind only that I was wronged, and that I will be revenged. For years and years together, in exile, in obscurity, and in indigence, have I plotted how to bring about the accomplishment of this great work of vengeance. It was the hope that reconciled me to suffering—the daily food on which I lived—the sole tie that bound me to existence ! Already have I been twice defrauded of my dues, for twice has your son broken through the toils I laid for him in Paris. But let him pass for the present : the arch-offender is now in my power, and in the exultation of my soul I can afford to brook minor disappointments. What, ho, Philippe !” addressing one of the men who kept guard over the prisoners, “ draw up a party of a dozen in the court-yard, and bid them load their muskets : take five of the prisoners with you, and fire on them without delay. We will count the rogues off by fives ; and the Marquis,

in consideration of his rank, shall be the last to pay the forfeit of his life. I think, Monseigneur, you cannot complain of this flattering distinction, for it is paying no more than a just homage to your aristocratic descent."

"Base, grovelling reptile!" exclaimed the Marquis, "you are so far beneath contempt, that were I even armed and at liberty, I would scorn to lift sword or pistol against you, but would leave it to the very humblest of my retainers to consign you to the death you merit."

"Brave words, Monseigneur," replied Chantreau, "brave words, but they are wholly thrown away on me. I can forgive your fiercest insults when I remember that the tongue which utters them will, in half an hour, be stilled for ever; and that when to-morrow's sun dawns, it will dawn on a heap of blackened ashes, which will be all that is left to show where once stood your château! Philippe, have you drawn up your party in the court-yard?"

"Yes, General," replied the serjeant, who entered the room while Chantreau was speaking.

"Then away with your prisoners," said the remorseless commander: "those five to the left of their puissant lord and master, the Marquis de Chatillon. In compliment to his rank, I shall myself superintend the execution of our illustrious host, and that nothing may be omitted to testify

my respect, I shall apply the first torch to his château. Off with your prisoners, serjeant, I say, and do not let me have to speak a third time."

The unhappy victims—five elderly peasants, who had been hastily summoned on the first alarm to the château—were immediately withdrawn, despite the impassioned remonstrances and supplications of their fellow-captives, of whom the Marquis alone preserved a stern gloomy silence, and the tears of the women who vainly besought the mercy of the vindictive Chantereau. The prisoners went to meet their fate with manly fortitude, and each turned round as he quitted the apartment to bid farewell to the kind and high-spirited master with whom he had so long lived, and whom he was never more to meet on earth.

Tears, which he did his utmost to repress, stood in the Seigneur's eyes as he witnessed the last touching adieu of his faithful followers, which his malicious enemy perceiving, said, insultingly: "What, the bold and haughty Marquis de Châtillon in tears—weeping like a woman!"

"If I do shed a tear," replied the Seigneur, recovering himself in an instant, "it is a tear of shame and indignation to think that I should be at the mercy of the most abject of men."

"The end is not yet," whispered Pierre to his master; "it cannot be but that the news of this surprize must have got wind far and wide through-

out the neighbourhood; and if so, we may yet stand a chance of being rescued."

" You deceive yourself, my poor Pierre," replied the Seigneur, " there are not men enough left, within the circuit of my lands, to afford us the slightest chance of a rescue. All that remains, therefore, is, that we do not dishonour ourselves by any further supplications to one who knows not what mercy is, but meet our fate like men."

These remarks were not made in so low a tone but that Chantereau overheard them, and quickly made answer: " You are right, most sagacious Marquis de Chatillon, there is not the slightest chance of a rescue; for, in addition to those within the château, I have a body of troops without, capable of resisting all the undisciplined force your peasants may bring to bear against us—"

His further speech was interrupted by the sharp, ringing report of fire-arms in the court-yard, which was immediately followed by low, suppressed groans !

A piercing shriek from the women, and a burst of mingled grief and rage from the male prisoners, told that they all too well understood the import of those dreadful sounds.

" They are gone!" said the Marquis, raising his eyes to heaven; " and may God's eternal curse and the undying scorn of his fellow-men cling to their dastard murderer! Man!" he

added, addressing Chantereau in terms of calmer and more dignified solemnity than he had yet permitted himself to use, “you think I hate you, but you are mistaken ; contempt, and even pity, are the only feelings I entertain towards you ; for so mean, so craven, so malignant a nature never yet lodged in human bosom. Short as is the span of life allotted me, I would not exchange conditions with you, were the throne of France and the wealth of the Indies to be thrown into the account !”

Maddened, despite the assumed calmness of his exterior, by the lofty, the cutting scorn expressed in these few words, and which he could not doubt came from the speaker’s heart, the humiliated Chantereau, by way of diverting the attention of his soldiers, who had been struck with the earnest dignity of the Seigneur’s manner, exclaimed, abruptly : “Now, my friends, fill all your glasses to the brim, and let us drink to the regeneration of our country, whose welfare we have all so deeply at heart. *Vive la République ! A bas les aristocrats !* Marquis de Chatillon, this is the only answer I shall condescend to make to your sarcasms. It is natural, you know, my friends, that the vanquished should abuse the victor.”

Agreeably to their leader’s directions, the soldiers drained, each a huge cup of wine, in honour of the Republic ; and the boisterous mirth that had

hitherto prevailed among them was beginning to be succeeded by the wild uproar of drunkenness, when Chantereau not wishing that the reins of discipline should be too much relaxed, said in a voice of mingled persuasion and authority: “A truce, men, to the wine-cup, for, remember, the business of the day is not yet concluded. Upwards of a dozen lives are yet due to the republic, and when this debt is paid, we may then give loose to festivity; but for the present, let us put a wholesome restraint on our convivial inclinations, as good soldiers should do, who have still certain painful but necessary duties to fulfil. Recollect Westermann’s orders—strike and spare not! In this case, in particular, lenity would be the worst of crimes, for the Marquis and his followers are the bitterest enemies France has yet had. Philippe, count off the next five, and away with them to the court-yard. But hark, what noise is that?”

“I hear nothing, General,” said one of the soldiers, “unless it be the rushing of the wind among the trees in the avenue!”

“I thought I heard an indistinct sound as of men engaged—again, do you not hear it?” exclaimed Chantereau, anxiously.

All listened attentively, but such was the clamour raised by those of the republicans who were still traversing the château, breaking open massive chests, overturning cabinets, chairs, tables, &c,

that for some few minutes, though each man fancied he heard a noise without the building, nothing could be distinguished with any certainty. At length the nature of the uproar could no longer be mistaken. The clash of steel, the discharge of fire-arms, and the shouts of many voices were plainly heard in the direction of the avenue ; and presently one of the guard who had been posted without, in charge of the horses, rushed in, covered with blood, which was pouring in torrents from a deep gash in his side, and just exclaiming : “ Save yourselves !—the sentinels are overpowered, and a body of armed royalists is close upon us !” dropped stone-dead on the floor.

The quick, firm tread of armed men was now heard, close at the front gate of the château.

In a moment the republicans had all started to their feet, but in a tumultuous crowd, without order or discipline, and half-stupified with wine ; while Chantereau, who was perfectly livid from the joint effects of fear and baffled vengeance, fell back in his seat, as if smitten with sudden paralysis.

“ Thank God !” exclaimed the Marquis, “ succour is at hand—Pierre, the instant our friends enter, and we are freed from these disgraceful bonds, hurry off the women to some remote quarter of the château, for they must not witness the tragedy that will follow ; it is no sight for them, and their tears and entreaties for mercy

on the enemy may unman us, at the very moment when it is most necessary that we should show an inexorable determination of purpose."

The exulting manner in which the Seigneur pronounced the words "succour is at hand" roused all the fiend in the bosom of the disappointed Chantereau. Starting up with a yell resembling that of a wild beast rather than of a human being, he thundered out: "You, at least, shall not live to exult in my downfall!" and pointing a pistol at the head of the Marquis he fired, but the weapon, aimed with an unsteady hand, went wide of its mark, and lodged in the wall at some distance.

For one brief minute the wretch stood as one bereft of sense; then addressing his bewildered soldiers who were all huddled together, like so many startled sheep, he exclaimed: "Upon them, men—hew them down—no quarter—remember Westermann's orders!"

At the word, the soldiers rushed with drawn swords upon the prisoners, but slight as was the distance between the two parties, they had not time to traverse it, before a well-appointed body of royalists, headed by Alphonse, poured into the room.

"My father! Where is my father?" was the young man's first anxious exclamation.

"Alphonse!—Can it be possible?" said the astonished and delighted Marquis, scarcely able to credit the testimony of his senses.

“What, the young Seigneur?” added Pierre, “oh, what a joyful surprize this is!” and in the uncontrollable excitement of the moment, the usually formal and pompous *maître-d’hôtel* began pirouetting like a dancing Dervise, and making the most grotesque grimaces in order to conceal his emotion.

Without an instant’s loss of time, Alphonse darted towards his father, hewing his way through the enemy whom his men cut down without mercy, and who, though they made a stubborn resistance, yet could offer no effective opposition. Immediately the captives were liberated, the Marquis, after a hasty passionate embrace of his son, snatched a sword from one of the dead republicans, and giving orders to his men to secure the person of Chantereau till the conflict was at an end, he plunged into the thick of the battle, while Pierre, seizing his opportunity, led off the women to a distant quarter of the château.

The struggle though severe, was brief, and soon but twenty men remained of that numerous body so recently flushed with victory, for those who had been engaged in plundering the château, the moment they heard of the rescue, betook themselves to flight, imagining in their fear that a whole royalist army was let loose against them.

Chantereau, meanwhile, remained in a state bordering on absolute distraction. On witnessing

the liberation of the Marquis, he had, in the fury of his despair, done violence to his coward nature and rushed forward with the determination either to kill, or be killed by him ; but while his sword was yet uplifted, it was struck from his arm by Alphonse, who whispering sternly in his ear : “ I told you we should meet again—remember the Bicêtre !” consigned him to the custody of two of his followers, with strict orders that they should prevent him from doing any mischief to himself.

When the conflict was wholly at an end, and the republicans had laid down their arms, the Marquis directed Pierre, who had re-entered the room, to take a party with him, conduct the prisoners to one of the strongholds of the château, and see that a guard was kept over them sufficient to preclude the possibility of their escape ; adding, that they should accompany him and Alphonse’s troop to Fontenay, there to be dealt with as the military council should deem most fit ; but on his son observing that the force which he had brought with him must return, without loss of time, to Machecoul, as Charette stood in need of their services, the Marquis said : “ Then the prisoners shall return with them, and Charette shall dispose of them according to his will and pleasure.”

“ I know what will be their destiny, if they fall into his clutches,” replied Alphonse ; “ he will consign them all to instant execution.”

“ So be it,” said the Seigneur, with a decision

of manner betokening that he would not be remonstrated with on this subject; “they deserve no better fate.”

“And this wretch—this Chantereau here!” exclaimed Alphonse, “who attempted my life with the assassin’s dagger, and hunted me in Paris like a bloodhound—what is to be done with him? You know not, father, what injuries I have sustained at the hands of this man—what calumnies he has propagated respecting the untarnished honour of our family—”

“Silence, young man!” interrupted the Marquis, in an angry, impassioned tone of voice, while his face absolutely blazed with fury.

He then flung himself into the nearest seat, and leaned his head on the table, as if anxious to conceal from those who stood about him the stormy workings of his soul. He remained thus for nearly ten minutes, during which his son maintained a respectful silence, grieved at his excessive agitation, which, he could not doubt, was connected with the slanderous insinuations of Chantereau, insinuations, however, in Alphonse’s opinion not worth the slightest notice. At length the Marquis rose, walked once or twice up and down the room, absorbed in profound reverie, after which, with a severe, resolved aspect, from which every trace of passion had vanished, he approached the men who kept guard over Chantereau, and exclaimed: “Soldiers, follow me with your pri-

somer!" strode forth out of the château. At the same moment Pierre, who had now mustered a competent guard, marched off the other republicans, apologizing to them with grave irony for being compelled to put such an abrupt stop to their conviviality, and giving them a poke in the rear every now and then with his sword by way of quickening their movements.

Alphonse was about to follow his father, when the Marquis, placing his hand on his shoulder, exclaimed, in solemn and earnest tones: "No, my son, no—such a scene is not for you; remain here, and give directions that the traces of death be removed as speedily as possible from the château. I shall soon return."

So saying, the Marquis walked slowly forth from the château, followed by the prisoner and his guards. He took his way along the high-road to the churchyard, where, it may be remembered the body of his wife—his repentant wife—lay interred; and when he reached the solitary grave which—agreeably to her last wishes—was conspicuous only by a green mound carefully weeded, and planted with evergreens, he looked down on it for some moments, with feelings of inexplicable anguish, and then beckoned the guard to bring forward their prisoner.

When that terror-stricken wretch came up, the Marquis eyeing him with a stern, but composed expression of countenance, exclaimed in

low, emphatic tones, at the same time pointing to the grassy mound: “Look here—do you know who sleeps beneath this hillock?” and then, as Chantereau made no answer, he continued, wrestling with the passion that every now and then threatened to disturb his grim placidity. “She who was your victim—who by your means was driven to a dishonoured grave!”

“Oh, God of Justice!” exclaimed Chantereau, seized with a sudden paroxysm of remorse, “thy bolt has at length fallen on my head!”

“Yes,” said the Marquis, solemnly, “from this spot you depart not alive. But I no longer strike for vengeance—that fierce desire is tamed—I strike to vindicate the outraged laws of honour—of gratitude—of humanity—all outraged, and with long impunity, by you. Kneel! I would not prolong your sufferings, ill as you deserve the least forbearance at my hands!”

Cold drops of perspiration stood on the wretch’s forehead as he heard this command, which too plainly betokened his approaching doom. His teeth chattered, his lips turned ghastly white, his limbs refused their office of upholding him, and in the excess of his mortal fear and agony, the abject creature kneeled grovelling, on the earth, at the Seigneur’s feet. He besought his compassion in terms that showed how utterly lost he was to all sense of manhood—he reminded him of the past days of their youth—he strove to extenuate

his guilt by alleging a variety of excuses suggested on the spur of the moment—he offered to join the royalists, and reveal all he knew of Westermann's schemes, and poured forth vows, protestations and entreaties, with sobs and groans, and convulsive writhings of the limbs, that could have been prompted only by the very frenzy of apprehension. He only asked his life, he said, and if the Marquis would but grant him that, he would do his bidding in all things—become, in short, his tool—his instrument—the ready, unconditional slave of his will.

With cold, contemptuous calmness the Seigneur heard him out, and when he had come to an end, merely replied: "If you have a prayer to utter, breathe it now," at the same time making a signal to the guard to present their muskets.

"Oh, God!" exclaimed the dastard, "is there then no hope of mercy?"

"None!" said the Marquis, sternly.

"Once more hear me—I implore you hear me!" and the wretched man was attempting to get on his feet again, when at a sign from the Marquis, the guns were discharged, and he dropped dead across the grave of his victim!

The Seigneur regarded the corpse for some minutes in fixed, gloomy silence, and then muttering in low tones, "Spirit of the injured Marie, thou art at length avenged!" returned at a thoughtful pace to the château.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was about a week after these events that the Marquis de Chatillon, who had now recovered his usual tranquillity, quitted the château with his son, in order to rejoin the grand army at Fontenay, having previously distributed the stock of republican arms among those of his tenantry, whose strength enabled them to wield a sword or musket, and whom he caused to be embodied as a sort of household-guard, for the defence of the château during his absence, under the command of Pierre.

During the journey the Marquis heard, for the first time, the particulars of his son's encounters with Chantereau in Paris, which, in the stir and bustle of subsequent events, Alphonse had had no leisure to communicate to him; but though he listened to the details with breathless interest, yet he showed

no inclination to clear up the mystery that hung about Chantereau's narrative in the Bicêtre. On the contrary, he maintained the same grave and stern reserve on the subject, which he had done ever since the night of the wretch's execution: his high sense of delicacy and family pride preventing him from dwelling on a theme, which it must have been as humiliating to him for relate, as for Alphonse to listen to. Finding this, the young man checked his natural curiosity; and his father, by way of diverting his attention, and giving a more cheerful tone to his own reflections, made him narrate, as circumstantially as he could, all the circumstances of his recent journey into the Marais. When informed who were the companions of his flight, the Marquis at first felt disposed to be angry; not so much from any suspicions that his son had formed an attachment beneath his rank, as that he should have encumbered himself with such associates, at a time when he should have moved on with the utmost celerity.

“But what could I do, father?” replied Alphonse; “I found my old friends in prison at Thouars, and as they were bound for the coast, in the same direction with myself, and their lives were endangered every hour they remained in France, I could not act otherwise than I did; more especially as they had the strongest possible claims on my gratitude.”

“ You were certainly placed in an awkward predicament,” said the Marquis ; “ for, as staunch royalists, it is clear that they were worthy of your good opinion.”

“ Good opinion !” exclaimed Alphonse, with unthinking ardour ; “ they are worthy of my undying affection, if only for the devotion which they showed me during my illness. Annette, in particular—”

“ Humph !” interrupted the Seigneur, somewhat testily, “ she, I presume, is the daughter of this Monsieur—what did you say the man’s name was ?”

“ Delille.”

“ Ay, that was the name. Very odd, I never could remember a man’s name in my life, unless he happened to be a brother-sportsman, or a Vendean seigneur.”

“ Yet Cathelineau is no seigneur,” said Alphonse, archly, “ and I do not think it likely you will forget him.”

“ Forget the brave Cathelineau !” exclaimed the Marquis, with warmth, “ I should as soon forget to draw my sword in battle ! Alphonse, there are certain men to whom nature has given a higher patent of nobility than any their sovereign could confer on them—and Cathelineau is one of these. Proud as I may be—and as it is fit I should be, in the present levelling times—I am not yet so

proud, but that I can rejoice in the opportunity of holding out the right hand of fellowship to this poor, obscure woolstapler; whom his descendants—years hence, when you and I are gathered to dust—will regard with as much pride, as I do the deeds of my heroic grandfather. But you were speaking of this young woman who, you say, showed you so much kindness during your illness."

"She did, indeed, show me unwearied kindness," said Alphonse; "and it is solely owing to her attentions, that I am now able to tell the tale of my recovery."

"You speak warmly of this Annette," observed the Marquis.

"And so would you, father," replied Alphonse, "were you once to become acquainted with her."

"Pray, what sort of a person is this paragon of female perfection?" asked the Seigneur, with assumed carelessness.

"Oh, as beautiful as an angel, and as young and sunny as a summer day-break!" was the unguarded reply.

"I thought so," exclaimed the Marquis, fixing a keen glance on his son, who now perceived that he had been somewhat too lavish in his commendations, "I thought so, and you have fallen in love with this angel, no doubt with her father's connivance. But hear me, Alphonse. Never with my consent shall you ally yourself with a family

such as the Delilles. What, my son, the sole heir of the De Chatillons and the plebeian daughter of a Nantes merchant, who most probably never had a grandfather! I would sooner see him in his coffin! But you have contracted no rash engagement with these presumptuous people—you have not fallen into the snare laid for you—no, no; you will not—you dare not say that, unknown to me, you have compromised yourself with these schemes!"

"Father—father!" rejoined Alphonse, earnestly, "you do not know whom you condemn; and least of all do the words of harshness become the lips of him whose son's life was saved by the Delilles."

"Well, well," said the Marquis, pettishly, "if they have been kind to you, I am grateful for it, and will not be slow to show it in the right manner; but you do not answer my question—you are not betrothed to this girl?"

"Set your mind at ease," replied Alphonse, not daring to make a more direct answer, "they have quitted the country, and in all human probability I shall never see them again."

Reassured by this reply, the Marquis proceeded in a more good-humoured strain: "I knew," he said, "that you could not have been guilty of such a flagrant breach of filial duty as to fall in love without my sanction. Revolutionary as are the times, I do not believe that the infection has yet

reached you, but that you have still enough of the old baron in you to be guided by me in your choice of a wife, well aware as you must be, that by my years, experience, and general knowledge of the world, I am far better able to choose for you, than you are for yourself."

"Oh, of course," replied Alphonse, amused by his father's blunt simplicity and single-mindedness of character, "but these are not matters to dwell on now. Believe me, I have no present thoughts of taking a wife."

"Right, boy; we have indeed more important matters to think of, and wives can always be had for the asking."

The Marquis and his son now drew near a long, scattered village situated in the midst of a cheerful woodland district. As they entered it, the sky became suddenly overcast, the wind died away, and down came a rattling shower which threatened to drench them to the skin. In this predicament they decided on making a short halt at the village, and alighted at the door of a farmhouse, which they entered without ceremony, assured that their presence would be welcome. But they were mistaken, for the farmer and his wife, an aged couple, no sooner caught sight of their military weapons, than they treated them with a coldness and reserve that took them quite by surprise.

For some time, the Marquis took no notice of this singular behaviour, but finding that his hosts were struggling to repress the ill-humour with which both were charged, he observed :

“ I fear we are unwelcome visitors, but the sky will soon clear up, and then we will relieve you of our presence.”

“ It is not that,” said the farmer, vexed and ashamed at being suspected of inhospitality, “ but—but—you are officers of the royal army, are you not ?”

“ We are,” said Alphonse ; “ but surely we are not the less welcome on that account ?”

“ Indeed, but you are though !” exclaimed the farmer’s wife with a peevishness she could not control.

“ Upon my life, dame, you are frank enough !” said Alphonse, laughing. “ It cannot be that you and your husband are republicans ?”

“ We are neither republicans nor royalists,” exclaimed the farmer, “ but quiet, peaceable folks, whose only wish is to attend to our own business ; but you will not let us do so, and are constantly calling us off from our duties and keeping the village in an uproar from week’s end to week’s end. There are my hedges can’t be cropped this autumn, because the peasants I employ have all gone off to join the royalists at Fontenay !”

“ Why can’t the royalists and republicans shake

hands like sensible people," exclaimed the dame, with the querulous selfishness of age, "and leave us all in peace and quiet? It's a hard case that my old man and I should be losers because great folks can't agree."

"It's a shame," chimed in her husband, "and I don't care who knows it. There's not a peasant for miles round, but his head is turned topsy-turvy. If I ask for Jacques, he's gone to join the royalists. If I send for Louis, the answer is just the same. Everybody is gone at the time when he ought not to have gone—at the very time when I most wanted him. There's the Marquis de Chatillon's soldiers halted here, a day or two since, and all the labourers in my employ, threw down their tools and were off to join them, and now my work must remain undone till they think fit to come back!"

"You take these matters too much to heart," said the Marquis, good-humouredly. "Keep up your spirits, and all will be right shortly."

"Nothing is right, but all is wrong," said the perverse old man, "and so far as I can see, if there be any change, it will only be from bad to worse."

"Man—man!" exclaimed the Seigneur, gravely, "can you bear thus to dwell on your own paltry grievances, when you think of the sufferings of your country? For shame—for shame!"

"I am an old man," replied the farmer, "a very old man, who have but a few years to live,

and I would fain pass those years in peace and quietness, without troubling my head about public affairs which I do not understand."

"Not understand!" said the Marquis, "there is no understanding required for a Frenchman to love his country, and the Seigneur whom Heaven has placed in authority over him!"

"I love the village where I was born and bred," rejoined the farmer, "and the inhabitants whom I have known from childhood, and I love my Seigneur, too, who many a time and oft has sate where you now sit, chatting with me about the state of my crops and gardens. What more can you expect?"

When a man is labouring under a grievance, there is nothing like making a clean breast of it. It is curious how the simple act of communicating one's afflictions to a companion, robs them of half their acuteness! Loquacity in such cases operates as a sort of safety-valve. Having disburthened himself of his grief, the old farmer became a little more gracious in his manner, and might have ended in being positively good-humoured, had not an unlucky question, put to him respecting his family, brought back all his spleen.

"Ay, there it is—there it is again," he exclaimed with bitterness, "I have but one child, a daughter—"

"And a fine, clever, spirited girl she was,"

interrupted the dame, “till these soldiers turned her brain. You should have seen her on market-days ! There was not a lass in the Bocage knew how to drive a better bargain. But when the news of the rising of the peasants first reached this village, and she heard the Curé exhort all his flock to arm in defence of their religion and country, she became quite an altered being—went moping about, poring over a stupid book full of lies, about Joan of Arc ; neglecting her household duties as if they were beneath contempt, and talked of nothing but fighting in the ranks of the peasantry, like another Maid of Orleans, as she fancied herself. My old man and I did all we could to stop her nonsense ; but when the Marquis de Chatillon’s soldiers came here the other day, she vowed she would join them ; and though we locked her up in her chamber at night, it was no use, for the next morning she was off, and we have never seen her since.”

“She is an ungrateful hussy !” said the farmer, “and always from childhood took a pleasure in thwarting my wishes. It is not ten months since I chose her a husband—a nice, sensible, elderly man, rich and prudent, and who would have been quite a father to her : but instead of accepting him with gratitude, she laughed outright in my face, and told me she would have nothing to do with such an old fool, for he was more in want of a nurse than a

wife. There's language for a girl only just turned twenty!"

The farmer told this supplemental grievance with such exquisite simplicity, that Alphonse, after vainly endeavouring to check himself, burst out into a violent fit of laughter, which the Marquis, who had no sympathy with filial disobedience, gravely discountenanced, observing :

"The old man is right—his daughter is an ungrateful hussy, and should have obeyed her father, no matter what were his orders. I have no notion of children presuming to think for themselves. But don't be uneasy, my friend, your silly daughter will soon have enough of campaigning, and will return to her household duties, rendered wise and tractable by experience."

"I doubt it much," was the peevish answer, "for she has the courage of a lion and the obstinacy of a mule. Meanwhile, who is to sell our eggs and poultry on market-days?"

The clouds had by this time dispersed, the rain was over, and the sun shone forth more brilliantly than before. The Marquis and his son, accordingly took leave of their testy host and hostess, the former of whom muttered, as they mounted their horses :

"God grant I may never see your or any other soldier's face again!"

"I never saw old age to so little advantage as in

that man,” observed the *Seigneur*, as they resumed their journey, “ for he has acquired all its spleen and selfishness, without any of its sagacity. Yet, after all, I do not much wonder at his ill-humour, for the ungrateful conduct of his only daughter, is enough to sour any father’s temper. What business had the wench to meddle with matters that no way concern her sex ?”

“ Yet the motive that prompted her to act as she has done, though mistaken, was at least lofty and patriotic,” suggested *Alphonse*.

“ Bah !” replied the *Marquis*, “ patriotism had nothing to do with it ; it was mere caprice and self-will. Her duty was to obey her father, and accept the husband he had selected for her ; but she is just like the rest of her sex—always sure to do the very thing they are told not to do, from a mere love of contradiction. *Alphonse*, no one knows the trouble that a self-willed woman causes in a peaceful household but those who have made the experiment. You remember my chief huntsman ?”

“ Yes ; what of him ?” asked *Alphonse*.

“ Why, when the *Count de Sevrac* was with me, nothing would satisfy the foolish fellow but that he must get married, and that I must give away his bride. I warned him of the inevitable consequences ; I told him—for I am a pretty good physiognomist—that his intended was a vixen ; but

he would not be convinced, so I was compelled to help him to a wife, and he has never had a tranquil moment since. Instead of accompanying me to the chase, as he used to do, he is now always pleading that his wife wants this, his wife wants that ; in short, that he must not stir from home, but must be tied to her apron-string. I have seen much of the world, boy, and believe me when I tell you that, in nine cases out of ten, there is never mischief afloat but a woman is at the bottom of it. There's my groom, Henriot—you recollect Henriot, who quitted the neighbourhood in disgrace a year or two ago—well, poor fellow, he was much to be pitied, for I am convinced that his termagant wife was the cause of all his errors ; and I shall never forget his telling me, with tears in his eyes, that he never was happy but twice since his marriage—once, when he ran away from his wife, and once—six months afterwards—when his wife ran away from him. And I believe him ; yes, I believe him from my soul !”

At this Alphonse laughed aloud, which somewhat disconcerted the Marquis, who, however, went on to observe :

“ Even my *maître-d'hôtel*, Pierre, clever, practical disciplinarian as he is in regard to women, even he tells me there are times when, with all his discipline, he can't keep them in check. His niece, Victorine, he assures me, is constantly mutinying

against his authority ; and when they are all in rebellion against him, he feels more alarmed than if he was compelled to face a park of artillery. How fortunate that you have not compromised yourself with that Mademoiselle—”

“ Had we not better mend our pace ?” said Alphonse, by way of diverting the tenor of his father’s thoughts. “ Fontenay is still some distance off, and our peasantry will be wondering what has become of their Seigneur.”

“ True, boy, true,” replied the Marquis ; “ come, Bayard,” patting the neck of his black, glossy steed, “ we are not jogging leisurely off to a boar-hunt now,” and putting spurs to their horses, the Seigneur and his son soon left the village many a mile behind them.

By noon, on the third day after their departure from the château, they had advanced to within a dozen miles of their journey’s end, when, on entering upon an undulating tract of open land, from which several cross-roads branched off, they descried at no great distance before them, an imposing body of armed men, who were moving forward at a brisk pace in the direction of Fontenay.

“ Surely that cannot be a republican force !” exclaimed the Marquis, bringing his horse abruptly to a stand-still ; “ the enemy cannot have had time to penetrate so far in this direction ; and yet I see cavalry among them, and they are all armed too, if

I may judge from the flashing of the sunlight on their weapons. Look, Alphonse, your eyes are better than mine."

After a long and steady scrutiny, the young chief replied exultingly :

"They are royalists, I am certain of it, for no disciplined troops of the line march in that irregular manner."

Alphonse was right in his conjecture. The force in question was no other than the division of De Lescure and his gallant cousin, Henri de Laroche-jaquelein, who had been some days absent from Fontenay, in their respective districts, reassembling their tenantry, and were now hastening to join the grand army, under General d'Elbée.

Loud and prolonged cheers burst from the ranks the instant the Marquis and his son were recognized ; and the two young chiefs, who at the time were riding together, at the head of their men, no sooner caught sight of Alphonse, galloping at full speed towards them, than they started as if they had seen an apparition, and testified the utmost joy at his reappearance amongst them.

"Welcome, a thousand times welcome !" said the cordial-hearted Henri, embracing him with all the warmth of a brother.

"We had given you up for lost," said De Lescure, "taking for granted that you were either dead or prisoner, for we knew that nothing short

of one or other of these contingencies would have kept you from us at such a stirring period."

"You did me no more than justice," said Alphonse, returning the fervent pressure of his friend's hand, "in supposing that my absence was compulsory. The truth is, I was seized with a severe illness in the Marais, which wholly incapacitated me for any mental or physical exertion. But more of this anon. We have now matters of greater interest to talk of than my adventures since we parted. And, first, what news of the republicans? You know, of course, of Westermann's arrival at Saumur."

"Oh yes," replied Henri, "and we propose giving him a reception proportioned to his deserts. We have heard of him occasionally during our march, but our information has not been so explicit as we could have wished. However, we shall know more when we reach Fontenay, for D'Elbée has agents out in all quarters."

"I hear for a certainty," observed Alphonse, "that Westermann will push one of his divisions into the Marais with a view of crushing Charette."

"Say, rather, of giving Charette an opportunity of crushing him," exclaimed Henri, with his usual buoyancy of spirit.

"To be sure—to be sure," said the Marquis, who overheard the words as he was riding up, "that is the right light in which to regard a

republican move on the Marais. Your troops, my young friends, are in excellent condition ; I have just been holding some conversation with them, and never knew them to be in better spirits, not even on the memorable night of our march on Thouars !”

“Who shall say ?” exclaimed Henri, eagerly, “that within three months from this time we are not joined by the emigrants from Coblenz, and are all on full march for Paris ?”

“For Paris !” replied De Lescure, “trust me, my cousin, many a weary month must roll over our heads ere we shall be able to extend the sphere of our operations beyond La Vendée.”

“Now that is so like you !” said Henri, “always so full of grave forethought and reflection ! Not march on Paris ! But I say we will march there, Mr. Philosopher—come, now, a wager—let us have a wager on the subject.”

“Wagers, Henri, are for trifles, and not for important matters like these,” replied De Lescure.

“Hear him !” said De Larochejaquelein, “do just hear him, Alphonse ! He speaks with all the awful gravity of an archbishop. Well, Heaven help me, I never could maintain a grave face for ten minutes together in my life.”

“And why should you ?” interposed the Marquis, “better to go through the world laughing than frowning—better to keep one’s heart fresh

and unwrinkled to the last, than have it withered and care-worn before its time!"

"Your maxim is a sound one," observed De Lescure, "and I am far from wishing to cavil at it; nevertheless, it is impossible for men engaged in such a momentous struggle as ours, not to feel—ay, and feel deeply, too—the serious responsibility of our situation—"

"Responsibility!" rejoined Henri, "of course we all feel our responsibility. I, at least, for one, consider myself bound to answer with my head for any defeat I may sustain, should a court-martial feel disposed to call for it. But I suspect there is no fear of that, for its value would be little worth. But, Marquis, I have forgotten all this time to ask you about your contingents. How comes it we find you and Alphonse journeying hither alone?"

"My men," replied the Seigneur, "set out, some days since, for Fontenay, whither I should instantly have followed them, but that I waited the return of a courier whom I had dispatched in the direction of Saumur. Besides, I had a strict account to settle—" his brow darkened as he said this—"with a ruffian who had dared to attack the château; and I never allow a matter of this sort to hang on hand."

"Have you been already attacked by the republicans?" exclaimed De Lescure, with surprise.

"You beat them off of course," said Henri.

“We taught them a lesson,” replied the Marquis, “that the survivors will be slow to forget; but the matter is not worth talking about. And now tell me, Henri, have you heard aught of Cathelineau and Stofflet since you left Fontenay?”

“Nothing at all,” said the young chief, “but we expect to find them arrived before us, with their recruits. Bonchamps, too, will join us with his division, so that we shall form a goodly muster, and what is better still, our men will be all provided with suitable arms, thanks to our late successes. No more primitive scythe and spade work—”

“Do not sneer at the scythes and spades of our brave peasantry!” exclaimed the elder De Chatillon, “but be grateful for the service they have rendered us.”

“You mistake me, Marquis,” replied Henri, “I had no intention of sneering, when I made the allusion, for a sneer on such a subject would ill-become my lips. But is not that Fontenay before us? Yes, by Heaven it is! There is no mistaking the lofty steeple of *Notre Dame*,” and the impetuous chief dashed forward at full speed.

When the royalists came within musket-range, De Lescure ordered the white flag to be unfurled, and no sooner was this banner seen, floating its full length in the wind, by those who were on the watch at the barrier, than the news flew with the

rapidity of lightning from mouth to mouth ; the shrill sound of the trumpet, and the noisy roll of the drum were heard, and almost instantly afterwards, the gates were thrown open, and the whole division, headed by the cavalry, and closed by a long line of infantry, marched in, amid the shouts of thousands of rejoicing peasants, who thronged every street through which they passed.

The whole of the grand Vendean army was now again collected, and ready for action ; a large body of men were quartered in the town, and the remainder in the neighbouring villages, and during their brief stay at Fontenay, nothing could surpass the enthusiasm of the troops ; who, not yet having met with any serious reverses, imagined, with the buoyant confidence of inexperience, that they had only to go forth, in order to ensure victory to their arms. By way of welcome to the new-comers, they set all the bells of the town in briskest motion ; and throughout the night the sky was reddened by the glare of bonfires, blazing within every open space, and the lofty spire of Notre Dame, illuminated by the crimson radiance, was distinctly visible for miles round.

CHAPTER VII.

AT a late hour on the following evening, as Alphonse, who had been busy during the day, drilling and disciplining his men, was sitting alone in his quarters, having declined, on plea of fatigue, accompanying his father to the military council, a young farmer of Lavallière, who acted occasionally as his aide-de-camp, entered with a message, that a stranger was without who wished much to have speech with him.

“A stranger, and to speak with me!” said Alphonse; “did you not ask him his name?”

“Oh, we know his name, Monseigneur,” replied the aide-de-camp; “he calls himself Victoire, and he joined our division a day or two before we entered Fontenay; but he is so very young—in fact, a mere boy—and so delicate in appearance, that we were unwilling to admit him as a volun-

teer, until we had spoken with you or the Seigneur. He seems not to have strength enough to bear up against the fatigues of a war, such as we are embarked in: yet the lad is a lad of mettle, I must say that for him; and he is already a favourite with us, by reason of his ardent enthusiasm in the good cause."

"Well, bid him enter," said Alphonse, "and if he really be such as you describe, he will be sure to join some other division should you reject him as a volunteer; so, despite his youth and inexperience, I think we had better gratify the poor boy's wish."

The aide-de-camp retired, and in another minute the subject of the foregoing dialogue made his appearance. He was neatly dressed, in the peasant costume of the district, with this difference, that instead of the usual round felt hat, he wore one of those large, slouching, broad-brimmed ones which are in use among the French peasantry on the Spanish frontier, and which, flapping over his forehead, threw the upper part of his face into shadow. In figure he was slender and undersized, and singularly puerile in aspect—in fact, he scarcely seemed to have numbered sixteen summers. His eyes were dark and piercing; his hair—such of it as could be seen beneath his slouching hat—was jet-black; his features small and delicate; his complexion sunburnt; his demeanour modest, but by

no means wanting in confidence; and though, on his first entrance into the young Seigneur's presence, he seemed labouring under a slight degree of embarrassment, yet he soon recovered his self-possession.

"So you are anxious to join our division?" said Alphonse, addressing him with an encouraging smile. "You are young—very young, to take on yourself the onerous duties of a soldier."

"I am young, it is true," replied Victoire, in a sweet musical voice; "but that is a fault which will become less and less every day."

"Ay, boy," said Alphonse, "but it will be some time yet before the defect is fully remedied."

"Oh, but I am not so young as I look," was the youth's quick rejoinder.

"Too young, I fear, to be an efficient soldier: you are not yet sixteen."

"Not sixteen! I was twenty last May."

"Indeed!" said Alphonse, surprized at this statement; "I should scarcely have thought that possible."

"Nevertheless, it is true," rejoined Victoire; "and as for my not being strong enough, I have been used to the work of the farm all my life."

"Very likely; but it is one thing to feed poultry, and another to encounter men in the shock of battle."

"Well, but grant me a trial, Monseigneur,"

entretned the youth, “and if I fail, then dismiss me; but do not reject my services merely because I am young, and look weaker than I really am. My neighbours are allowed to risk their lives, in defence of their Seigneurs and Curés, why then should not I have the same privilege conceded to me? They cannot be more ardent in the cause than I am. For months and months past have I been seeking an opportunity of engaging in this glorious struggle, and the hope of one day being able to accomplish my wish, has been the engrossing subject of my thoughts by day, and of my dreams by night; it has lightened the dull, plodding drudgery of the farm, it has reconciled me to sufferings and persecutions under which I must else have sunk; and—”

“Sufferings and persecutions!” interrupted Alphonse, struck with the earnestness with which the youth spoke. “Why, what can you have suffered at your early age?”

“Sorrow,” replied Victoire, “belongs to no age in particular, but is as often found among the young as among the old. I, at least, have not been exempted from it by virtue of my years.”

“Bah, child!” said Alphonse, impatiently; “you have displeased your parents, I suppose, by doing some foolish thing or other, for which they have reproved you, more sharply than your sense of manhood can bear. This, I suspect, is

the sum total of the mighty sufferings and persecutions you have endured. Speak : is it not so ? Ah, I see by your confusion that I am not very wide of the mark."

" You are partly right, Monseigneur," replied Victoire, dropping his eyes modestly on the floor: " my parents are indeed the cause of all my troubles. They are old and selfish, and anxious only to increase their own gains and advance my interests, as they call it, though at the expense of my happiness. Because I will not submit to their dictation, and ally myself to age and ugliness, and meanness and decrepitude, merely because there is wealth in the case, they have been persecuting me with their importunities and menaces for the last four months and upwards. But I will not so degrade myself—I will not do such violence to my own feelings, let my father and mother say what they will. If I owe them obedience, they owe me kindness and consideration, but this they have long ceased to show me. I have, therefore, quitted their roof, and nothing on earth shall induce me to return to it. I have no wish to marry—I never will marry ; but one desire is uppermost in my mind—to mix actively in the strife of men—to share in the perils and enterprizes of this most righteous war—to be foremost in the advance, and last in the retreat—to be the chosen companion of the brave, the loyal,

and the patriotic—and to feel, undistinguished as I am, that I have had some share in crushing the enemies of our Seigneurs and our holy religion. Oh, Monseigneur, when I heard the exulting cheers of your troops as they passed a few days since through our village, with the snowy banner of the monarchy uplifted above their heads, and their arms flashing back the sunlight, and their countenances lit up with pride and joy, my heart leaped as if it would have burst its bounds, and from that moment I vowed that I, too, would be a soldier!"

"My brave Victoire!" exclaimed Alphonse, delighted at hearing sentiments so congenial to his own, "your wish is granted; you shall be a soldier! and I am sure that ere long you will become a distinguished one. Glorious, indeed, must be the cause, that can call forth the enthusiasm of one so young as you are! But you know not yet the difficulties and dangers that beset the soldier's path, and conspire to damp his ardour; you know not yet what it is to see blood flowing like water in the battle-field, and to find the voice that one moment addresses you in friendly accents, the next, hushed in the grim silence of death. Here, at Fontenay, you see but the sunny side of war—the gallant muster of soldiers, the throng of chiefs, the hurrying to and fro of couriers, the swell of martial music, the show, the pomp, the glitter, the exciting bustle and preparation; but

wait till you come face to face with the fiend arrayed in all his ghastly terrors, and then, perhaps, you—”

“ I have taken all these things into account,” interrupted the youth, with vivacity ; “ nay, I have imagined the very worst that can happen, and am prepared to brave that worst, upheld, as I shall be, by the consciousness that I am fulfilling a sacred duty. It is strange, Monseigneur, but I feel as though a voice from Heaven had called on me to become a soldier !” And as he uttered these words, he uplifted his eyes in mute religious reverence ; but in doing so, the hat which shaded his brow, dropped off, and as he endeavoured to recover it, while falling to the ground, a quantity of black hair, dislodged by the suddenness of the action, fell down about his neck and shoulders, and showed the astonished Alphonse that it was a female who had been thus addressing him.

“ Good God, is it possible ?” exclaimed the young Seigneur, astonished at this unexpected discovery.

“ Do not think lightly of me, for having ventured to deceive you,” said the girl, her cheeks crimsoned with blushes, while a tear stood in her dark eye ; “ indeed—indeed, I had no other motive than the one I have assigned. The story I told you is perfectly true. My parents wished me to marry an old, infirm, rich man, and I had no other way of escaping their persecutions than by flying from home.”

A strange recollection flashed suddenly across Alphonse's mind, and looking earnestly at the girl :

“ I remember now,” he said, “ that on my road hither, I halted during a shower at the cottage of an old farmer and his wife, who were exactly what you describe, and who told me, among other domestic grievances, that they were much afflicted with the conduct of their daughter, who not only refused to marry the man they had selected for her, but had so excited her vivid imagination, by constantly dwelling on the deeds of Joan of Arc, that nothing would satisfy her but that she, too, must turn heroine, and become the saviour of her country. Are you that romantic visionary ?”

“ I am, I am,” replied the girl, with earnestness ; “ but call me not a romantic visionary. Believe me, Monseigneur, I have not acted thus from the mere impulse of a disordered imagination, but from what seemed to me to be a sacred principle of duty.”

“ Rash, foolish girl !” said Alphonse, with as much gravity as he could throw into his countenance, “ what has duty to do with the matter ? Woman's duty lies in a far different sphere of action to that which you prescribe for yourself. The camp and the battle-field are no places for her. Her fitting home is beneath her parents' or her husband's roof ; it is there she shines with brightest

lustre—there the meek and unobtrusive qualities of her head and heart have the fairest opportunity of display; but when she quits her modest, domestic privacy, and ventures abroad into the world, challenging public admiration as a heroine, she not only does violence to the purest and holiest feelings of her nature, but subjects herself to a thousand insults and calumnies; and even when conscious of the exalted motives that influence her conduct, she can scarcely expect otherwise than to have them misunderstood and misrepresented."

"Insults! calumnies!" exclaimed the girl, blushing deeply, while at the same time her eyes flashed with indignation, "I fear neither the one nor the other. No one but yourself will ever know me for other than I profess to be; but even should my sex be discovered, still I apprehend no insults from our brave and generous peasantry. Besides, I shall have the consciousness of the rectitude of my own motives to support me; and while this is the case, I will brave the worst evils that calumny can inflict on me. I see, Monseigneur, that you are not yet convinced—that you still think I have taken a step unworthy of my sex, and injurious to my fair fame; but even these considerations shall not scare me from the path I am henceforth resolved to pursue, nor will I allow any poor, paltry thoughts of self to stand between me and what I conceive to be my duty. I act under the direct influence of a con-

trolling power, which I cannot, even if I would, resist."

Astonished to the utmost degree at her inflexible determination of purpose, her lofty bearing, her enthusiasm, her magnanimity, and the self-confidence tempered with perfect modesty, that marked her whole demeanour, Alphonse for a few minutes was unable to make a reply. At length he said, kindly but gravely :

"I see how it is, my poor girl, your susceptible fancy has been kindled by the contemplation of the character of our famous Maid of Orleans ; the solitude of your own home, rendered irksome to you by the conduct of parents with whom you have no one feeling in common, has increased the excitement of your mind, assisted, no doubt, by the impassioned exhortations of the Curé, and the agitated state of La Vendée, and now you seriously imagine that you are destined to be your country's saviour! 'Tis a noble error ; but it is still an error, and, as such, is to be deprecated. Take my advice, therefore, dismiss this delusion from your mind ; exercise your reason instead of your fancy ; go back and reconcile yourself to your parents ; resume that homely unostentatious course of life for which your sex and your youth best qualify you, and leave it to men to fight the battles of the country. You are a virtuous, a high-minded girl, and will be much more likely to benefit us by your

prayers than by your sword, for the supplications of pure hearts like yours are never breathed to Heaven in vain. Come, you will take my advice, will you not?"

"Never, never!" replied the girl, passionately: "I will never return home to persecutions that would embitter every hour of my life—to pursuits that I despise and detest. You may as well hope to turn the stars from their courses, as me from my fixed determination. If you reject me as a volunteer, I will apply to some other of our Seigneurs, and doubt not that I shall succeed in my wish to become a soldier."

"You are too sanguine in your expectations," said Alphonse, "for now that I am acquainted with your secret, I shall feel it my duty, in compassion to your youth, your sex, and the generous but mistaken motives from which you act, to oppose your application by every means in my power."

"You will not be so cruel?" exclaimed the girl, with visible alarm, "you will not deprive me of the only charm that reconciles me to life? On my knees—humbly on my knees—I implore your forbearance."

"I would fain comply with your wish," replied Alphonse; "but I feel it my duty to save you, in spite of yourself, from the commission of a folly which you will repent all your life."

"Once more I implore you to have pity on me,"

continued the girl, with increased agitation ; “you know not what you will drive me to by your interference.”

“ Nonsense, you must, and shall return home,” said Alphonse, sternly ; “and the time will come when you will thank me for the very interference which you now so earnestly deprecate.”

“ And is this your final resolve ?” asked the girl, with a strange meaning in her eye. .

“ It is,” was the decided answer.

“ Then there is nothing left but this !” and starting up from her knees, the enthusiast drew a concealed pistol from her breast, and pointed it at her head.

“ Hold — hold, you frantic girl !” exclaimed Alphonse, darting forward and wresting the weapon from her hand.

At this ticklish moment, Henri de Laroche-jauclein burst into the room !

“ Give you joy, Alphonse !” he said, while his countenance glowed with animation : “ we march to-morrow to meet Westermann, and his invincibles ! I have this instant quitted the council, who have ascertained for a fact, that the enemy have broken up from Saumur, and are advancing upon Bressuire and Thouars. Our couriers are off in all directions, to give the necessary directions to our levies. But, heyday, whom have we here ?” casting a scrutinizing glance at the girl, who stood, with folded arms, gazing at the young men :

“ surely it cannot be !—Yes it is—a woman, by all that’s irresistible ! And a pretty one too, and scarce old enough to be a grandmother ! Verily, Alphonse, you are a sly dog ! I see now the reason why you could not attend the council. Well, the excuse is a fair one, I must admit ;” and the light-hearted Henri gave vent to a loud burst of laughter.

“ You perceive now the consequences of your indiscretion,” observed Alphonse, addressing the fair enthusiast : “ I warned you, that your motives would be constantly liable to misinterpretation, and this is among the least of the annoyances to which you will be subjected.”

“ Indiscretion !” said Henri, turning archly from one to another. “ Oh, ay, I see it all ; the old story, with the addition of a very convenient disguise. Well, good folks, as you seem perfectly to understand each other, my presence, I presume, may be dispensed with ;” and with another laugh he turned to leave the room.

“ Stop, Monseigneur !” said the girl, with a grave and composed dignity of manner that produced an instant impression on De Larochejaquelein ; “ stop, I entreat—I command—and hear what I have to urge in vindication of myself. It is true the Seigneur de Chatillon and myself do understand each other, but in no such sense as your uncourteous sneer would seem to imply.”

She then repeated to Henri, the story which

she had previously told Alphonse. She explained the motives of her conduct ; she stated the profound impression which the accounts of the sufferings of some of the peasantry had produced on her mind ; she alluded to the solemn exhortations which she had heard from the village Curé, calling on all true Frenchmen to arm in defence of their holy church, which was menaced with destruction ; and concluded by a pathetic and passionate appeal to the forbearance and sympathy of the young chiefs.

The language of truth, earnestness, and sincerity, can never be mistaken, and rarely, if ever, fails to produce the desired effect. At first, Henri listened to the girl's statement with an incredulity which he took little pains to conceal ; as she proceeded, however, the smile on his countenance gave way to an expression of deep interest in her narrative ; and as she closed her appeal to all the nobler feelings of his nature, the conviction of her perfect sincerity forced itself on his mind, and he regarded her with a look of extreme wonder and admiration.

“ You have heard our heroine's story, Henri,” said Alphonse : “ now, tell me, what do you think of it ? ”

“ What can I think,” replied De Larochejaquelein, “ but that she is a noble minded-girl, who might put to shame the fairest and proudest belles of Paris.”

"But do you not agree that I was right," resumed Alphonse, "in urging every argument in my power to prevail on her to dismiss this quixotic project from her mind, and return home to her parents? She little knows, poor simple girl, what she will have to undergo; the fatigues, privations, and dangers she must brave; and, what is more trying to a pure, sensitive nature like hers, the coarse language of the camp with which her ears will be continually wounded."

"These are considerations that might well induce you to abandon your resolution," said Henri, addressing the young enthusiast.

"They might do so," replied the girl, "if higher and more momentous considerations did not interfere. But I cannot think of self, when I call to mind the glorious cause to which I dedicate myself. La Vendée, once freed from the infidel republicans, and that instant I resume those quiet homely occupations which, as you tell me, Monseigneur, best become my sex; but till then, I forget that I am a woman, and remember only that I am a soldier in the cause of my God and those Seigneurs whom He has placed in authority over us."

"By Heavens, Alphonse!" exclaimed Henri, warmly, "there is a lofty disinterestedness and magnanimity about this girl such as I did not think her sex was capable of. Romantic as is her scheme, we must not thwart her in it; no,

that would be subjecting her to too cruel a disappointment."

"I fear, indeed, we must let her take her own course," replied Alphonse; "for but the minute before you came in, she was threatening to commit suicide. Well, my young heroine, your prayer is granted."

"Bless you for those words!" said the girl. "Now, then, I am at last happy!" and raising Alphonse's hand to her lips, she kissed it with the most fervent respect and gratitude.

"And now let me recommend you to conceal those luxuriant tresses more carefully than you have yet done," observed the young chief, "for everything depends on the strictness with which you guard your secret."

"I will cut them all off, Monseigneur, and then my disguise will be more effectual."

"Nay, that would be too great a sacrifice to insist on!" exclaimed Henri, archly.

"It shall be made were it twice as great," replied the girl, with a modest dignity of manner that put an instant check on the Seigneur's merriment.

Alphonse here quitted the room, and returned almost immediately with the aide-de-camp who has already been mentioned. "Camille," he said, "conduct this young volunteer to your quarters, and take care that he is treated with respect and

attention. I intrust him to you because you are a quiet, steady fellow, and will show him that kindness which is due to his youth and inexperience. He is determined on becoming a soldier, so you must see to it that he does not involve himself in needless peril. Remember, I shall exact a strict account from you of the manner in which he is treated, for he is a *protégé* of mine, and has not been accustomed to the wild licence of the camp.” Then addressing the girl, he added in an under tone: “ Fear nothing, Victoire, for my friend here and myself will guard your secret as if it were our own. And now, good-night, and recollect that we march betimes to-morrow.”

“ Good-night, Monseigneur,” and with a respectful obeisance to the young chiefs, the girl withdrew with her companion and guardian, Camille.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHILE the royalist army was re-assembling at Fontenay, General Westermann was busy concerting measures for the re-occupation of the entire Vendean district. His first step was to dispatch a reinforcement to Nantes, after which, leaving a strong garrison behind him at Saumur, he set off at the head of a numerous division in the direction of Bressuire and Thouars, while another detachment was ordered to take up a position near Beau-preau and Chollet. The General's march was signalized by the most frightful burnings and massacres, for Chantereau's defeat and death had roused all the worst passions of his nature, and he encouraged his soldiers in the commission of every species of enormity.

As the majority of the towns which the royalists had captured were but slenderly garrisoned, from

the dislike of the peasants to this sort of duty, they were soon retaken by Westermann, who, however, did not long retain possession of them, for one after another they again fell into the hands of a powerful division, which had hurried, by forced marches, from Fontenay, under the command of D'Elbée, Henri, De Lescure, and Bonchamps ; and the republican General himself sustained such a crushing defeat near Bressuire, that he was no longer able to make a stand against the royalists. These last still continued to advance, and though they had sustained severe losses in the course of their different actions, their ranks were speedily filled up by recruits, who flocked to them from all quarters, maddened by the wanton cruelties perpetrated by the enemy. At the town of Douay they gained another signal victory, and elated by this series of successes, the bold peasants, after a day's halt, and without any communication with their leaders, rushed off in a tumultuous body from the town, exclaiming simultaneously : “ We go to Saumur !”

Unable to check this general impulse, the chiefs adroitly gave way to it, and putting themselves at the head of the troops, prepared for an attack of that important post. The town was assaulted on three points at once, but De Lescure being slightly wounded in the arm, early in the action, his soldiers, who saw him covered with blood, became alarmed,

thinking his wound was mortal, and while in this state, a sudden charge of republican cuirassiers made the panic general. At this crisis, a lucky accident changed the fortune of the day. Two waggons, which had been overturned in the road, stopped the further progress of the cuirassiers, and De Lescure took advantage of this obstacle to rally his dispirited forces, while one of his aides-de-camp coming up at the moment directed some flying artillery on the enemy, which turned the scale in favour of the Vendéans. De Larochejaquelein, meantime, who commanded the assault in a different quarter, carried the republican camp, and advancing close up to the intrenchment, without the town, threw his hat into it, with the exclamation, "Who will go and fetch it?" and immediately darted forward, followed by the majority of his troops. Finding themselves defeated at all the three points, the enemy fled in confusion from the town ; about fourteen hundred men, however, still remained in the castle, but perceiving that all chance of further resistance was hopeless, they hastened to conclude a capitulation with the royalists, who allowed them to retire, retaining possession of their arms.

While one great division of the Vendean army was thus pursuing its march of triumph from Fontenay to Saumur, another, less numerous, but equally enthusiastic, was moving under the com-

mand of the Marquis de Chatillon and his son, with Stofflet and Cathelineau, to join Charette, with the intention of advancing, in concert with him, to the attack of Nantes. The junction of the two armies took place at Machecoul, but as, even when united, they were inferior, in point of numerical force, to what he supposed they would have been, Charette proposed to the Marquis and his colleagues that they should make no movement for the present, but wait the result of the operations carrying on in the Bocage.

“I have good reason to believe,” added the General, “that Nantes is much too strongly garrisoned to be assaulted by us with any prospect of success; and you all know how disastrous would be the consequences of failure, on the minds of troops like ours, who are not yet sufficiently inured to the vicissitudes of war to bear up against reverses with fortitude.”

“We require at least five thousand more troops than we possess for such an enterprize,” suggested Cathelineau, “to say nothing of artillery, with which we are but inadequately furnished. Besides, as Nantes lies almost wholly on the right bank of the Loire, it is from that side that the principal operations must be conducted,” and he referred to a plan of the city which was spread out on the table at which the chiefs were seated.

The Marquis and Stofflet reluctantly acquiesced

in the justice of Cathelineau's opinion, whereupon Charette observed: "Should Westermann's troops—as I hope and trust will be the case—be defeated by General d'Elbée, he will then of course pursue his route to Saumur, and that important town once in his possession, he will be able to detach a sufficient body of men to act against Nantes on the right bank, while we attack it on the left."

"No doubt, if General d'Elbée succeed in all his operations," said Stofflet, laying a sneering emphasis on the word "all," "he will be able to co-operate with us against Nantes; but such wholesale success is not to be calculated on with any certainty."

"Your pardon, Stofflet, but it is to be calculated upon," replied the Marquis, with his usual sanguine vivacity. "War, I know, is a game of chance, but not such a war as we are engaged in, where honour, spirit, enthusiasm, combined with inflexible determination of purpose, are all leagued together on our side. You, yourself, saw the General's division set out from Fontenay. Did you ever see troops take the field in better condition? Think you such men are to be crushed by a mere horde of blood-thirsty desperadoes? Never! We shall beat them as we have already beaten them, and my only fear is, that they will not give us an opportunity of beating them to our heart's content.

I am surprised, Stofflet, that you, as a zealous royalist, should insinuate a doubt of the General's success!"

"I speak as I think," returned Stofflet, doggedly, "and if my opinions do not happen to be agreeable, I am sorry for it; but I am a plain, blunt soldier, and cannot change them, even to please you, my Lord Marquis de Chatillon."

"Come, come, Stofflet, do not be so touchy, I meant you no offence," said the Marquis, with the placid manner of one who felt his superiority; "but surely you must know, as well as I do, what sort of stuff these republican brigands are made of! Did not I myself see you at Fontenay, with a mere handful of brave peasants, scatter a whole detachment of them, like chaff before the wind?"

"Ay, Marquis," rejoined the peasant chief, whose irritable jealousy was somewhat appeased by this well-timed compliment; "but you must remember that Westermann's troops are of different mettle to those with whom we have hitherto contended."

"We will beat them, notwithstanding," replied the Marquis, laughing; "and should our peasants' right arms fail to make the requisite impression, General Providence shall attack the brigands with the butt-end of a sermon, and the deuce is in it if that don't set them scampering—at least, it has never failed in putting me to flight, and I am not

one easily to turn my back, whether on friend or foe."

This blunt sally completely restored, as it was meant to do, Stofflet's good-humour; and the council soon afterwards broke up, with the understanding that no step of consequence should be taken until decisive intelligence had been received respecting D'Elbée's movements; and in order that this might be obtained without delay, a trusty courier was dispatched in the direction of Bressuire, with injunctions to follow the march of the royalists, and, in the event of their meeting with any serious check, to return immediately, but, otherwise, not to leave them until they reached Saumur, when he was to consult with the chiefs about their co-operation by the right bank on Nantes, and return at his utmost speed with their reply.

"And now that this weighty matter is off our minds for the present," said Charette, "we will, if you please, examine the defences of the town, which it has cost me considerable time and labour to put into something like an efficient condition."

The chiefs readily assented to this proposition, with the sole exception of Alphonse, whose unexpected return to Machecoul having revived in his mind a variety of tender and melancholy associations connected with Annette, he strolled away alone to the open space at the outskirts of the

town, of which mention has already been made, and seated himself on the same wooden bench which he had occupied with her, on the evening before their separation.

“How vividly,” he exclaimed, giving unconscious utterance to the thoughts of which his mind was full, “how vividly this solitary spot—this spreading tree above my head—this sun which pours down its declining radiance on earth—brings the image of Annette to my recollection ! It was here she sate, her hand clasped in mine, and her eyes filled with tears, as she talked of her approaching departure. Can I ever forget the last fond, pleading look she turned on me as we rose to take our way back into the town ? God grant that the presentiment she then expressed, may be a false one, and that the time may soon arrive when we may be restored to each other’s society, for I at least never knew how strong—how lasting was the hold she had gained on my affections till the moment when she set foot in the vessel that bore her from the shores of France !”

There are certain moods of mind when even the slightest incidents will awaken the most thrilling recollections. As Alphonse thus sate, indulging in pensive, but not painful thought, the wind which was just rising came whispering among the branches above him ; and this circumstance,

trivial as it was, instantly brought back to his memory the evening which he had spent with Annette among the ruins of the Castle of Tiffauges, when the same soft wind made gentle, plaintive music among its roofless halls. “And on that evening it was,” said the young chief, pursuing the train of reflection thus suddenly called into play, “that Annette first expressed her wish that we should never more be separated, but wear away life together in the peaceful obscurity of some town or village far removed from the din of civil war. Had I then yielded to her wish, she need not now have been an exile in a foreign land, for her timid father, satisfied with having obtained a protector for his child, would never have dreamed of quitting France. It was a great—a very great temptation, and I now regret—but, no, I did right to resist it. Even for thee, dearest Annette,  I may not abandon the sacred cause to which I am devoted like a priest to the altar of his God. I must remember nothing now but that I am a sworn soldier of my country, and that she has the first and most pressing claims on my attention.” As he thus spoke, he rose abruptly from the bench, as though anxious to shake off the too effeminate train of thought in which he had been indulging, and after taking several turns up and down the walk, soon regained his usual cheerful and manly serenity of mind.

On his way back into the town, as he approached the seat which he had quitted a few minutes before, he found that it was occupied by a young soldier, whose eyes were bent on a book which he seemed to be devouring with avidity. As Alphonse drew near, he looked up from the volume, when the former discovered that the new-comer was no other than the enthusiastic Victoire.

“ Ah, Victoire !” exclaimed Alphonse, “ what has brought you to this solitary spot ?”

“ I was weary, Monseigneur,” replied the girl, “ of the boisterous gossip of my comrades, and was desirous to have an hour or two to myself.”

“ I warned you that you would find much in our military way of life not suited to your tastes,” observed the young chief.

“ Hitherto,” said Victoire, “ I have had no great cause for complaint.”

“ And what is this book that you were poring over so eagerly when I came up ?”

“ It is only an odd volume that I met with in a small bookseller’s shop this morning, Monseigneur.”

“ And may I venture to ask what is its subject ?” said Alphonse, “ a fairy tale—the adventures of Amadis de Gaul—or the History of the renowned Charlemagne and his Paladins ?”

“ It is none of these,” replied the girl, vexed at the air of badinage with which the young chief spoke.

“A love tale, probably then,” continued Alphonse, archly.

“Not so,” rejoined Victoire, indignantly, “I hate all such puerilities,” and forthwith she handed the book to her companion, who, on consulting the title-page, found that it was an odd volume of the “Lives of Remarkable Women,” that it contained a critical inquiry into the true character of the Maid of Orleans, and was embellished, by way of frontispiece, with a full-length portrait of the belligerent vestal, who was represented with huge black eyes rolling portentously under the shadow of an enormous helmet, and wielding a sword fitted by its weight and size not only to cut down a man, but to fell an elephant.

“Upon my word,” said Alphonse, returning the volume to Victoire, “a very suitable study for one who aspires to emulate the deeds of this most tremendous of Amazons.”

“Not to emulate them, Monseigneur,” replied the girl, “for that would be rank presumption; but I may at least hope to show the same zeal in the cause of my religion and my country that Joan of Arc showed.”

“But remember her fate, Victoire! Would you not shrink from encountering such a death as hers?”

“I have no fear of being burned by the republicans for a witch,” exclaimed the girl, smiling;

“for you must know, as well as I, that the age of such absurd superstition has for ever passed in France.”

“Well, but has the axe of the guillotine no terrors for you?”

“None!” replied Victoire, emphatically, “I would die a thousand deaths on the scaffold, could I, by such martyrdom, rescue France from the blood-thirsty, God-denying anarchists who now hold her in thraldom. Oh, Monseigneur! you know not—you cannot even imagine, the high and solemn thoughts on which, of late, my spirit has fed, as upon manna, in the barren, solitary waste of home. Time was—and that alas! not long since—when I was a mere gay, unreflecting girl; who proposed no other object to herself than to fill the office of a household drudge, and minister by her thriftiness to her parents’ inveterate passion for accumulation. But in one short week—nay, in one day—a change came over my mind, and I awoke as from a long dull slumber of years. The Curé of a neighbouring parish—an earnest, impassioned man—came to address our villagers in the church. He spoke of the sufferings under which the whole country groaned, and of the insults and persecutions to which our holy religion and its ministers were subjected by the republicans; he predicted the calamities that would ensue, were a determined stand not to be made against the infidel oppressors:

and he invoked a solemn curse on all who refused to stand by the Church and the Monarchy, in this, their hour of adversity. Not a peasant heard him but was roused to fury by his discourse ; the whole district was inflamed with patriotic ardour ; and I, too, Monseigneur, notwithstanding my sex, vowed that I would take a part in the deliverance of my country. To strengthen myself in this resolution, I paid constants visits to the Curé, who lived a few miles off our village ; and the kind, lofty-natured man received me with uniform courtesy : strengthened and elevated my mind by his conversation and the volumes which he selected for my perusal : and, in fact, wholly changed my character, with the anxious hope, as he observed, that I would exert whatever influence I might possess over my peasant neighbours, in confirming them in their determination to go forth to battle, in defence of their religion and their country !”

“ But the Curé did not recommend you to turn soldier yourself, did he ?” asked Alphonse, with a smile.

“ He did not,” replied Victoire, with some slight embarrassment of manner, “ and I feared to communicate to him the resolution to which I had come, lest he, like you, might denounce it as the dream of a romantic visionary. But even if it be a dream, it is one that will last during my life—or at any rate, till France is freed from the licentious sway of the republicans !”

Though less frequently exhibited, because seldomer drawn forth by circumstances, yet there is a political, as well as a religious fanaticism, and instances of this were by no means uncommon during the progress of the Vendean war. Many of the more ardent peasantry—women as well as men—exhibited an enthusiasm bordering on absolute frenzy in the hour of battle, and during the march or the bivouac that preceded or followed it ; and even rejoiced in the wound that stretched them lifeless on earth, firmly believing—as their Curés assured them—that the souls of those who fell in the good cause, would be instantly translated to Paradise !

“ And so, in order to qualify yourself for becoming an efficient soldier,” resumed Alphonse, “ you are studying the character of the renowned Maid of Orleans !”

“ I am studying the character of one of the most illustrious individuals who ever adorned human nature,” replied Victoire, impressively, “ whose valour was only equalled by her piety, as her piety by her magnanimity ; who pursued the thorny path of duty, heedless alike of the sneers of her enemies and the remonstrances of her friends ; who, living, saved France by her lofty but well-regulated enthusiasm ; and dying, bequeathed it the glory of her fame and the grandeur of her example. What she was, I would fain be—an

honour and a blessing to generations yet unborn. But if I may not equal the splendour of her achievements, I may surely aspire to follow, at an humble distance, in her footsteps, and show my country that the age of patriotic devotion in woman has not yet wholly passed away!"

" You are indeed, a generous, high-minded enthusiast," exclaimed Alphonse ; " and I trust that one day or other, when these disastrous troubles are at an end, you may find some youth—though that will be no easy task—worthy of your woman's love."

A gravity, amounting almost to sternness, overspread Victoire's countenance, as her companion thus spoke.

" No compliments, Monseigneur, if you please," she said, " for as yet I have done nothing to deserve your eulogy. As for love, I have never even given it a thought ; my mind is engrossed with nobler considerations, and revolts at the idea of such frivolity. May I pray you then, henceforth, to regard me simply as a soldier, and estimate me solely in proportion to my zeal in that capacity ?"

At this moment the shrill tones of a bugle were heard. Victoire started at the sound.

" That is the summons for the muster of the General's troops on evening parade," she said, " and I would not neglect any opportunity of gaining a better insight than I possess into mili-

tary usages," and with a hasty wave of her hand to Alphonse, she rose from the bench, and hurried back into the town.

The young Seigneur looked after her as she withdrew.

"Extraordinary girl!" he exclaimed, "to whom all considerations of self are as nothing when compared with those stern and solemn duties which you conceive that you owe to your country! Even while I deprecate, I cannot but admire that high-toned enthusiasm which enables you to keep in subjection the strongest instincts of your sex—to rise superior to its weakness—to trample, as it were, on its tenderest and most feminine sensibilities. Gracious Heaven! how soul-stirring must be the cause that can produce so complete a revolution in the gentle nature of woman!"

CHAPTER IX.

WITHIN ten days from the time of his quitting Machecoul, the courier returned with the glad tidings of the defeat of Westermann's troops, and the capture of Saumur by the royalists. He added that he had communicated to General d'Elbée the proposition respecting the attack on Nantes, and found him willing, and even eager, to take part in it, with which view he announced his intention of leaving De Larochejaquelein, with a garrison, in Saumur, while he himself would set out with his troops for Angers, which the republicans had already evacuated, and there await a further communication from Charette.

This news filled the chiefs at Machecoul with exultation, and the peasantry who, having never yet been so many days absent from home, had begun to murmur, felt all their ardour revive at

the prospect of again coming to blows with the detested enemy. The Seigneurs, like skilful tacticians, took advantage of this improved temper among their troops, and without loss of time opened a second communication with the royalists at Angers, where it was finally decided that, on a certain morning agreed on, both parties should simultaneously commence an attack on Nantes, D'Elbée approaching it by the right, and Charette by the left bank of the Loire.

Charette and the troops under his command, notwithstanding that they had several arms of the Loire to cross, three of which were fortified, arrived before Nantes at the appointed time, and instantly commenced the attack, in which they were soon afterwards joined by D'Elbée's division, which had been detained unexpectedly before Niort, where the republicans had left a small detachment, that had held out longer than was anticipated.

The Generals Canclaux and Beysser, who held the chief command in the city, defended themselves with singular skill and bravery, and were strenuously supported by the citizens, the majority of whom—especially the lower classes—were stanch republicans ; but despite all the resistance they could offer, the Marquis and his son, at the head of their detachment, succeeded in penetrating as far as the suburbs. Here a desperate conflict took place, in which the royalists were on the point of

being overpowered, when Charette, receiving timely intelligence of their critical state, hurried to their assistance, leaving Cathelineau and Stofflet in charge of the position which he had quitted.

D'Elbée's division, on their side, were less successful, for they were opposed to the strongest quarter of Nantes, and the cannon and musketry played on them with such unceasing energy, that they were more than once compelled to retire in confusion. The instant it was perceived that their ranks were disordered, sortie after sortie was made on them ; and at length D'Elbée and De Lescure, being unable to restore confidence and discipline among them, reluctantly abandoned their share of the enterprize.

Meanwhile the Marquis de Chatillon and Alphonse, aided by Charette, maintained their ground with great obstinacy ; but when, by the retreat of the division which acted from the right bank of the Loire, General Canclaux was enabled to detach a numerous corps against them, they were forced to give way, which, however, they did not do without contesting every inch of ground. Alphonse, in particular, exasperated at this the first defeat his troops had yet experienced, fought with the ferocity of a stag at bay ; and putting himself at the head of a small body of his most resolute adherents, rushed back into the very thick of the enemy, by whom he was immediately surrounded.

Close beside him, and fighting with great desperation, was a young royalist soldier, who more than once saved his life, by warding off some deadly blows aimed at him by a republican officer, who seemed bent on making him a prisoner. As Alphonse turned to thank him by a glance, what was his astonishment to discover in his gallant defender the girl Victoire !

“ I told you, Monseigneur,” said the heroine, in a hurried whisper, while she still maintained the conflict, “ I told you to look for me wherever the danger was most pressing. But, hark ! what cry is that ?”

While she was speaking, loud, reiterated cries arose in the rear of “ Cathelineau has fallen !” The effect was electrical on the small corps, who up to this moment had bravely seconded Alphonse in his unequal struggle. They instantly turned and endeavoured to cut their way through the republicans, so as to rejoin their comrades, now in full retreat ; and in the general confusion Victoire, despite her efforts to hold her ground, was forced away from the side of Alphonse.

The Marquis and Charette, immediately they became aware of the young chief’s danger, contrived, with infinite difficulty ,to rally about two hundred men ; but though, at the head of this force, they succeeded in penetrating to within a few feet of the spot where Alphonse still fought, and bring-

ing off in safety the shattered remnant of his troops, they were unable to rescue him, for he had fallen to the ground, stunned by a blow from a musket; and before they could reach him, they were forced back again by their own followers, who, distracted by the incessant cries of “Cathelineau has fallen!” which now rose in all quarters, had once more betaken themselves to precipitate flight.

On recovering from his stupor, Alphonse found himself supported in the arms of a young republican officer of rank—the same whom he had before observed as being anxious to make him prisoner.

“The fortune of war is against you,” said the republican, in courteous tones, “but do not be uneasy; I promise you your life, though I cannot undertake to grant you your parole until I have consulted the generals.”

“And where are the royalist forces?” inquired Alphonse, anxiously.

“All dispersed,” replied the officer: “the defeat has been a most decisive one; but you, at least, have nothing to reproach yourself with, for I marked you in the battle, and can bear testimony that you did all that a brave man could do. I trust you are not seriously hurt?”

“No,” said Alphonse, hastily rising, “my cap saved my life; I was merely stunned for a while, and am now quite recovered and prepared to ac-

company you. I presume my destination is the public jail."

"I regret to state," rejoined the republican, "that we have received strict orders from the Revolutionary Tribunal now established in Nantes, to consign every royalist without distinction to prison; and I dare not, even if I had the will, disobey these instructions. But I have influence with General Canclaux, and through him with the Tribunal, and I think, therefore, that I may safely pledge you my honour that your life shall be saved. I purpose accompanying you myself to the place of your imprisonment, because, I presume, you would gladly be spared the pain of being consigned to the stricter surveillance of my own soldiers, many of whom are somewhat of the roughest in their nature."

"I thank you, Monsieur," replied Alphonse. "May I ask to whom I am indebted for so much courtesy?"

"I am Colonel Destouche," exclaimed the officer, with a polite bow; "and your name is—"

"Alphonse de Chatillon."

"What, the son of that brave Seigneur who granted my friend St. Lambert his freedom some time since?"

"The same."

"Then, indeed," said Destouche, eagerly, "I have an urgent motive in befriending you, though

your name, I fear, is an odious one to all the authorities in Nantes. However, rest satisfied, Monsieur de Chatillon, for my word is pledged for your safety. And now, if you please, we will move forward."

Leaning on the arm of Colonel Destouche, Alphonse walked slowly through the suburb—which was strewed with corpses—into the heart of the city, where a scene of uproar and licence presented itself that astonished even him, who had witnessed the doings of a Parisian mob. The populace seemed literally frenzied with excitement. Here a wild, savage group were howling and dancing round a lamp-post to which they had suspended a royalist prisoner, whose body was still quivering in the agonies of death; there, a mob, consisting of several hundred women and boys, were endeavouring to force some more prisoners from the clutches of a troop of soldiers who were escorting them to the public jail; and in another place, a flaming patriot, with blood-shot eyes, naked arms, and a cap of liberty on his ragged head, was standing on a bench roaring out with the lungs of a Boanerges divers elegant extracts from the last number of Hébert's "*Père Duchesne!*" Close by the market-place a guillotine was erected, which was still dripping with fresh blood; and round it, were placed rows of empty benches that but a short time before had been filled with visitors who had crowded

to the spectacle of wholesale murder, as though it were a mere holiday pastime! Alphonse shuddered as he passed this terrible emblem of revolutionary legislation, but made no remark, for on casting a glance at his companion's countenance, he saw that it exhibited unequivocal indications of shame, vexation, and embarrassment.

When they reached the prison, which, owing to the confusion that everywhere prevailed, they contrived to do without molestation, Colonel Destouche, with an air of authority, gave peremptory orders to the jailer to treat his captive with every possible courtesy, as it was most likely that, in a day or two, the military authorities would set him at large on his parole.

Awed by the sight of the Colonel's military uniform, and still more by his authoritative bearing, the jailer unhesitatingly agreed to do his bidding; whereupon Destouche took his leave, with a promise that he would shortly return and report proceedings: and the jailer leading the way through a sort of common room or hall, in which a multitude of prisoners of both sexes were confined, conducted Alphonse up a staircase that led out from this hall, into a smaller room immediately above it, where he left him, taking the precaution to lock the door on him as he retired.

The apartment in which the young chief now found himself, was in every respect a commodious

one, plainly but neatly furnished ; and in the centre near the hearth, in which there was a blazing fire, stood an oblong table, at which an elderly, grey-headed man was seated, intent, apparently, on the perusal of a volume that lay open before him.

The noise made by the entrance of a stranger roused him from his study, and with a deep sigh he looked up, when Alphonse recognized the wasted, grief-worn features of his old friend and preceptor, Servette !

In an instant the friends were clasped in each other's arms.

“ I am shocked to see you here ! ” exclaimed Alphonse, seating himself beside Servette ; “ what has brought you into the lion's den ? ”

“ Say, rather, into the butcher's slaughter-house ! ” replied the old man, bitterly.

“ You are strangely altered since I last saw you in Paris,” resumed Alphonse.

“ Disappointment and sorrow,” said Servette, “ make strange havoc with us all ! And now, to see you here, in the power of wretches who set at nought the claims of justice and humanity, fills my cup of grief to overflowing ! ” and tears, which he could not repress, fell down the speaker's haggard cheeks.

“ Fear not for me,” exclaimed Alphonse, “ my life is safe : I have the solemn pledge of a republican officer, high in rank and authority, to that

effect. But how happens it, my friend, that I find you so changed in your opinions? ‘Wretches!’ is a strange term for you to apply to the democrats, whether of Paris or of Nantes.”

“ I never justified acts of cruelty,” rejoined Servette, “ it is not in my nature to do so. I condemned them quite as much as you can do; but being induced to suppose that they were the acts of a reckless, infuriate mob, I thought it unfair to hold the legislature responsible for them, and still more so, to plead them as an excuse for abandoning the august cause of freedom. But now the case is altered. It is no longer the *canaille*, but the government, that are the guilty parties. Yes, I blush to say so, but it is in the high places of authority that murder, upon a wholesale scale, meets with direct encouragement!”

“ Why, then, are you not in Paris,” asked Alphonse, “ denouncing in your influential journal conduct which you so vehemently reprobate?”

“ I have already done so,” replied Servette, “ and have thereby compromised myself for ever with Danton and his party. Not only did I denounce the September massacres, and their infamous originators, but I tore off the mask of the great leader of the Jacobins, and laid bare his selfish object in instituting the Revolutionary Tribunal. For these high crimes and misdemeanours against the state, as they were styled, I was held

up to public vengeance by Marat; and had it not been for the prompt interposition of a friend, who enabled me to escape from Paris, my head would, long ere this, have rolled beneath the axe of the guillotine."

"But what brought you here?" inquired Alphonse; "I should have thought that a city like Nantes, where you passed so many years, would have been the last place you would have flown to for refuge."

"Alphonse," replied the old man, sadly, "I was weary of my life, and cared not whither I betook myself. My native town was the first place that suggested itself to my mind, and here accordingly I came, thinking that, to a man situated as I was, one town was nearly as safe as another. You will say, perhaps, that I might have flown from France, but I had neither the means nor the inclination to do so; for the risks I ran of discovery were nothing, in my situation, compared with destitution and obloquy in a foreign land. Well, all suspense and anxiety are at an end now; for I was recognized shortly after my arrival here, by a man whom I once thought my friend, and being denounced to the judges of the Revolutionary Tribunal, as an enemy of the virtuous Marat, I was consigned to this prison, which I am doomed never to quit, but for the scaffold! But enough of my own griefs. And now tell me

what mischance has brought you within these dreadful walls?"

In reply, Alphonse acquainted his friend with all the circumstances connected with the attack on Nantes, its failure, and his own capture by Colonel Destouche, adding, that he had every reason to believe his imprisonment would be but temporary; and the instant he was liberated on parole, he would exert all his influence with Destouche, to obtain his old preceptor's release.

"No earthly aid can avail me now!" rejoined Servette, shaking his head; "for I have already been before the Tribunal, and to-morrow I pay the penalty of my contumacious opposition to Danton and Marat. Yes, my doom is fixed; and I shall hail the hour that sets me free from the burden of existence! For, oh, Alphonse! the downfall of all my republican hopes—of all my long-cherished schemes for the regeneration of France, is, indeed, a bitter blow!—far worse than any that the guillotine can inflict. In the thoughtful seclusion of my closet, I had nourished proud dreams of the perfectibility of human nature; and when our revolution first broke out, I imagined that they were on the eve of being realized. I gave other ardent spirits credit for the same disinterested patriotism which I felt myself, and thought it possible to solve the great problem of reform without bloodshed. Even when I found scenes of violence

ensue, I still clung to the hope that they formed no part of a political system, but were the mere insulated acts of such wretches as always abound in periods of disturbance. I now find that I was mistaken, and that the lofty theories of the philanthropist are ill-suited to the tasks of the business-like world about us. I expected more from humanity than humanity has it in its power to achieve, and should have remembered that the slaves of ages cannot all at once start up enlightened freemen, but must work out their redemption by slow and painful degrees."

Alphonse was so struck with his friend's altered sentiments—once so sanguine and enthusiastic, now, so full of despondency—that he could not refrain from again alluding to the change.

"Change, indeed!" replied Servette; "but I did not foresee at the period to which you allude, that the Revolution would get into the hands of unprincipled adventurers, who would make it a stepping-stone to suit their own selfish views of aggrandizement. As it is, we have but substituted one despotism for another—the despotism of the mob for that of the throne. But it is impossible the present state of things can last. All the truest and noblest instincts of our nature shrink with horror from the supposition; and when the anarchical spirit that now convulses the country, shall have worn itself out, reason and

justice will assert their claims, and those claims will be acknowledged. Then will the martyrdom of the wise, the brave, and the virtuous not have been in vain, but act as an impressive warning to future generations."

A gleam of his former animation shone in Servette's eye as he thus expressed himself; but the light soon faded, and he resumed, in a saddened tone: "If you knew, my young friend, the cruel trials to which I have been subjected since I entered within these walls, you would not wonder at the indifference that I feel for life. Till yesterday, this room was occupied, in common with myself, by a father and his two sons—amiable, intelligent folks, and sincere lovers of freedom, but who nevertheless fell under the suspicion of the judges of the Revolutionary Tribunal. An interchange of thought and feeling soon took place between us, which served to lighten the dreary hours of our imprisonment. But they are gone; the fatal summons to the scaffold was received by them here yesterday; and language cannot paint the agony of that moment when the father pressed his children in a last fond embrace! And, oh, the horrors of the solitude that ensued when I looked around, and found them no longer by my side! It was not the mere solitude of a room—no, that I could have borne, but it was the intolerable solitude of the mind, when the brain for a time is as

a dull, barren waste, unrelieved by a single thought or image. But, thank Heaven, my earthly pilgrimage draws to a close, and to-morrow I enter upon a purer and more exalted state of being—a state destined to endure while the seasons fulfil their courses, and the thousand blazing worlds above our head wheel round in infinite space."

As Servette ceased speaking the jailer entered, and with more respect than he usually showed his prisoners, placed before them food, wine, and a lamp.

"Is there anything else I can do for you, citizen?" he said, addressing Alphonse: "if I can, speak your wants at once, before I lock up for the night."

"Nothing," replied the young Seigneur, "but that if Colonel Destouche should call, you will apprise him of my anxiety to see him without delay."

The jailer promised that he would do so, and for some time after he had quitted the room the prisoners maintained a strict silence, each occupied with his own reflections. Alphonse was, perhaps, the saddest of the two, for a host of recollections were stirring in his mind, all connected with Servette. He thought of the days of his childhood, when the old man was the chosen instructor of himself and Annette, the confidant of their youthful hopes and fears and buoyant imaginings. Then

tenacious memory recalled the days he had spent with him in Paris, and more particularly that memorable interview with Danton, when he had offered his own life as a substitute for that of his pupil. “And this brave, magnanimous man must perish,” exclaimed Alphonse, wringing his hands in the violence of his grief, “without my being able to strike a blow in his behalf! Oh, that I were once again at the gates of Nantes! With my own brave troops to second me, and this fresh incentive to exertion, I would triumph against overwhelming odds!”

Servette looked up as Alphonse thus gave vent to the bitterness of his feelings, and pressing his hand fervently, said, with a wan smile: “Come, my young friend, remember this is the last night we shall ever spend together, so we must not spend it gloomily. Here, pledge me in this glass”—and he poured out some wine—“and rejoice for my sake that in a few short hours I shall be freed from all my anxieties. Would that others who are dear to me enjoyed as much serenity of mind as I do at this moment! But my poor friend Delille—I fear he must be overwhelmed with misfortunes, if he have not already fallen beneath the axe, for when I sought his abode, which I did on the very day of my arrival at Nantes, I learned that he was gone, no one knew whither.”

“Do not be alarmed on his account,” replied

Alphonse, "for both he and Annette are by this time safely arrived in England."

"I am delighted to hear you say so," exclaimed Servette, "Alphonse, it has been remarked that dying men have the prophetic spirit vouchsafed to them. Now listen to what I am going to tell you, for believe me there is truth in my prediction. The day will come, and that at no distant period, when you and Annette, as husband and wife, will live happily together years after I have mouldered into dust; and if disembodied spirits have the power of revisiting earth and acting as guardians to those they loved in life, I will often be hovering invisibly near you, to comfort you in the hour of affliction, to strengthen you against temptation, to confirm you in good resolutions, to keep you in charity with your fellow-men, and prepare you for the high and lasting destiny allotted to those who, during their sojourn on earth, have kept in view the sacred duties of humanity. As yet, my young friend, your career is but in its commencement; in a few days, when released from imprisonment, you will resume your course with all the ardour and energy which belong to your character; but let me warn you how you indulge in that desire for worldly distinction, which I have observed is the strongest principle in your nature. Learn to estimate at its proper worth what mankind calls glory; above all, resist the pleadings of ambition, or if you must

needs be ambitious, be so only in your zeal to help forward the great cause of freedom and intelligence. Alas, how hollow, how illusory, how unsatisfying to the well-regulated mind, are those distinctions of which the world is so enamoured ! Wealth, rank, and power are ours but for a brief season, and are seldom, if ever, achieved but at the cost of true happiness.”

“ You mistake my nature,” replied Alphonse, respectfully. “ I desire not glory for the sake of ministering to my self-love ; but one wish only possesses my soul, and that is, to rescue France from the calamities to which she is now subjected.”

“ I know you better than you do yourself,” resumed Servette, “ and know that, like a true Frenchman, glory is the great object of your ambition. You desire to stand prominently forward in the world’s eye—to be talked of, admired, envied, wondered at ; well, the desire—at your age particularly—is a natural and even a generous one ; but beware how you push it to extremes ! As religion in excess becomes fanaticism, so ambition, when misdirected or carried beyond the proper limits, degenerates into selfishness and egotism, which are the grave of all lofty principle. Keep your love of glory, then, in strict subordination to a cool and steady sense of duty ; and if you must needs continue to uphold with your sword the cause of

royalty and aristocracy, imitate the truly heroic example of Washington, and turn aside from the flatteries of your countrymen as dangerous prompters. But I weary you with this long homily ; so come, let us make our last frugal repast together."

Shortly afterwards, having taken a few mouthfuls of refreshment, the old man gradually dropped off into a sleep which lasted nearly four hours ; and, during this period Alphonse sate quietly by perusing the volume which lay on the table, and scarcely venturing to draw breath lest he might wake his companion. Servette's slumber was profound as that of a wearied infant ; there was no conscience at work to distract him with fearful visions ; his course through life had been marked by self-denial and magnanimity ; and he could say —what so few can, with truth—that he had done his best in his humble sphere, to leave his country wiser and better than he found her. Once or twice, as he slept, a smile of uncommon radiance lit up his countenance, and occasionally words escaped him which, so far as Alphonse could make out their import, were those of delight and astonishment.

Having perused several of Pascal's best letters —Servette's favourite author—Alphonse closed the volume, and rising gently from his seat, proceeded to stir the fire, which was getting low in the

hearth, and the sudden blaze flashing in the sleeper's eyes, awoke him. For an instant he sate as if bewildered and unconscious of where he was ; but soon recognizing his companion, he said, with a faint smile :

“ I have been a great traveller since you last heard the sound of my voice.”

“ Traveller !” exclaimed Alphonse, “ how so ?” and he looked anxiously at his friend, as if apprehensive that he had been suddenly seized with delirium.

“ Yes, traveller !” repeated Servette, “ but only in the land of dreams. While my physical frame has been quietly seated in this chair, my imagination has been wandering through the realms of space, among worlds peopled by the happy, placid spirits of the great and good of past ages. Oh ! who would wake to dull, material life when such are the visions that exalt his fancy in slumber ! Do you remember the conversation we once held with Brissot, at Roland's, respecting the state of man after death ?”

“ Perfectly,” replied Alphonse, “ and also how disgusted we both were, with the speculation of that flippant sophist.”

“ Do not speak harshly of him,” said Servette, “ he is more to be pitied than blamed, as all are who take refuge from doubt in blank, hopeless infidelity.”

“ You were severer then, than you are now, in

your reprobation of Brissot's materialism," observed Alphonse.

"My young friend," exclaimed Servette, solemnly, "I am standing on the threshold of eternity, and from one in such a situation the language of harshness comes with peculiar impropriety! Let my dying words be those rather of pity than condemnation, and let me exercise towards others the forbearance and charity of which my own frail nature stands so much in need. But to return to my subject. The conversation I allude to has often recurred to me of late, and I am now more than ever persuaded of the justness of the sentiments I then expressed. Yes, Alphonse, despite the sneers of the encyclopædist, the momentous truth remains untouched, that to have once been is to be for ever. Destruction and renovation are the fixed laws of the moral as of the physical creation; and there is no such thing as the absolute cessation of the principle of life. If it perishes in one form, it is only to be immediately renewed in another. I have been—I am—therefore I must ever be!"

"What do you mean by the expression, 'I have been?'" inquired Alphonse.

"The subject is a perplexing one," resumed Servette, "and enveloped, doubtless for wise purposes, in mystery; but I will endeavour to make myself understood, though, I fear, the question is rather to be apprehended by the imagination than

solved by the understanding. Have you never in the course of your experience, met with a countenance, or heard a voice, which has come upon you with quite a startling effect, as if they were perfectly familiar to you, though you are convinced that such could not possibly have been the case ? Have you never visited a particular spot for the first time, and been struck with the singular circumstance of its features being anything but strange to you ?”

“ Now you recall these circumstances to my mind, I think I may say I have,” replied Alphonse.

“ And this is the answer that many men would give, were such questions to be put to them,” observed Servette ; “ but, though struck for the moment with the curious fact, you, like others, have never dwelt on it—never analyzed, nor attempted to pluck out the heart of the mystery—never, in fact, given it a second thought. Now it has frequently occurred to me in my hours of solitary contemplation, which have, as you know, been numerous, for, alas ! I have been a dreamer all my life, and shall not wake till to-morrow !—it has often, I say, occurred to me that these surprises are the dim, vague results of our experience while a resident on earth, years, or it may be, centuries since. Hence the source of the imaginative faculty. The creative power is the attribute of God, not of man, whose imaginations I believe

to be but the promptings of his past experience—a mere transcript, unknown to himself, of what he has seen and felt and pondered on, in some other than his present state of being."

"Why, that is the very doctrine of the metempsychosis?" said Alphonse.

"Partially, but not wholly so," replied Servette, "Pythagoras held that, after our death, our souls might possibly animate the brute creation; I only believe that every reasoning being now living, has had a pre-existence, in the form of some other reasoning being, man or woman; and the basis of my belief is those strange, imperfect, bewildering and unconscious recognitions of which I have already spoken."

Alphonse, who had but little sympathy with the purely ideal, smiled at these speculations, and replied:

"But is not this doctrine at variance with what you just now said, about disembodied spirits revisiting earth, and hovering as guardian angels round those they loved in life? If, when I am dead, the soul that animates me goes to animate some other terrestrial being, how can it be a pure spiritual intelligence, descending from a higher sphere?"

"Who shall say at what period the earthly pilgrimage of man's soul shall terminate?" replied Servette. "Mine may possibly have been a dweller

here below, from the earliest recorded time, and to-morrow its terrestrial destiny may be accomplished, or it may still, in some other human form, renew its earthly career. What I said, therefore, was only in the way of hypothesis. Ultimately, I believe that the souls of all, of Adam born, will be translated to a higher sphere, whence they will ascend by degrees, purifying themselves at every ascent, to a still nobler height, until, at length, they are absorbed in that divine, omniscient, omnipresent Essence, a portion of whose divinity informs, sustains, broods over, and consecrates Creation?"

While Servette was thus speaking, the prison clock struck midnight, and the warning sound sent a chill to Alphonse's heart; for he could not but remember that when it next struck that hour, his old friend and preceptor would have ceased to be.

Servette, observing the anguished expression of his features, said, with one of his most benevolent smiles :

" I can guess the feeling which that monitory voice has awakened in your mind; but do not sorrow on my account — rejoice rather, that I am about to be set free from a life which no longer retains a single charm. I know—I feel—you cannot understand nor sympathize with this indifference, for to the warm blood, sanguine impulses, and bounding health of early manhood, life has attractions, even when clouded with disappointment; and

the grave, with its awful stillness that no kind voice breaks, and its gloom that no cheering sun disperses, is an idea which youth shrinks from with abhorrence; but dull, frozen age which is susceptible of no lively emotions, and which can no longer borrow a joy from hope, feels differently—more especially when the fond dream which it has cherished through life, is rudely and for ever dispelled."

In this earnest and affecting manner, the old man continued to converse, throughout the greater portion of the night. Occasionally, however, he would drop off into a heavy sleep, and during these periods, his companion gave free vent to the emotion which he checked, though with difficulty, while his preceptor's calm, thoughtful eye was upon him.

The lamp was now dying away in its socket, and the fire—the fuel for which was exhausted had gone out; but the room was not in darkness, for a few faint beams of daylight were struggling in at the window, and momentarily increasing in strength. As Alphonse sate, shivering with that keen sense of cold which we feel towards the morning, the clock struck seven, and Servette, who had been some time asleep, suddenly woke, and paced the room with a brisk step, by way of reviving the languid circulation of his thin blood.

"The lamp, I see, has gone out," he said, "but it is no matter, for it will be daylight presently.

I have been selfish in falling asleep so often, and leaving you to your own sad thoughts ; but I could not help it, for I have not the vigour that I had even six months ago. What was the hour that struck just now ?”

“ Seven, I think, but I did not count the strokes,” replied Alphonse.

“ Seven o’clock ! Only two hours more, and then, Alphonse, I am a dweller in eternity ! May God deal mercifully with me, for at this awful season, when a man can no longer shut his eyes to the conviction of his own unworthiness, I feel that I have need of all His forgiveness,” and falling on his knees, he offered up an extempore prayer for his companion and himself, which breathed in every word a spirit of the truest piety.

Gradually the light became more distinct, but it was a dull, cheerless light, as if the sun were enveloped in clouds.

“ Yesterday, at this hour,” observed Servette, “ the morning was full of promise, but to day all is gloom ; you have no idea, Alphonse, how much real pleasure a captive draws from the entrance even of a sunbeam into his prison. True, he can no longer bask in its rays, still he can enjoy the reflection that there is a world without, which is deriving benefit from its genial warmth and brilliancy. After all, there is no happiness equal to that which we experience in speculating on, and

contributing to, the happiness of others. At this moment, when I and the world are about to shake hands and part, how frivolous appears to me that thing of show which society calls greatness ! The only true greatness consists in doing good to one's fellow-creatures ; and far rather would I now feel the conviction, that I had done my best to improve humanity, than that I had sat on the throne of the Cæsars, and made the conquest of all Europe.”

By this time it was broad daylight. Life began to stir again in the prison, and they could hear the distant unlocking and clapping-to of doors, and the faint hum of population without the walls. Presently the door of the room immediately beneath them was unbarred, and then rose loud cries of anguish and despair from the doomed inmates.

“ Alas !” exclaimed Servette, “ in talking of myself I have forgotten others. The fatal moment has arrived, and these poor people have just received the summons to execution ! But, hark ! what hour is that now striking ?”

They listened—the clock struck nine—and as the last stroke ceased to vibrate, the door was unlocked and the jailer entered, holding the prison register in his hand !

“ I am sorry,” he said, with an attempt at complaisance, “ to be the bearer of ill news, but the cart with the escort is below.”

“I shall have companions, I fear,” said Servette.

“Yes,” replied the jailer, “twelve prisoners in the room below have, this instant, been consigned to the custody of my attendants, and they will mount the scaffold with you. Come, citizen, the soldiers are waiting in the court-yard.”

“Farewell, then,” said Servette, pressing Alphonse to his breast, “farewell for ever! Do not forget the old man who so loved you, but let his memory be associated with none but calm and cheering thoughts.” Then raising his hands and eyes to Heaven, he exclaimed, with solemn and touching emphasis: “Earth, take my last—my unreluctant farewell! Farewell, the recollections of the past—the consolations of the present—the vague dreams of the future! Farewell the companionship of friends—the tempting solitude—the reverie by day—the calm sleep by night! Farewell sun and moon—seed-time and harvest—the changes of the seasons, and the still greater changes wrought by grief or joy in the human heart! I go whither there is neither time nor change—where to-day is as yesterday, and the next hour as a thousand years hence! What the first created man is, I shall soon be, and already I stand on the threshold of that phantom-peopled world, whose portals there is no re-passing. Hitherto, I have been walking, as it were, in a dream, but now life begins in death! Cities, princedoms, empires shall

rise, decline, and pass away, and the records of their history follow them to oblivion ; but I shall still exist—still form a portion of that mysterious spirit of vitality which pervades creation ! You are impatient, Sir," he added, turning to the jailer, who had listened to this apostrophe with astonishment, " I am ready to accompany you," and with one more embrace of Alphonse, Servette slowly walked from the room.

CHAPTER X.

FOR several hours after Servette's departure, Alphonse remained as if stunned. He feared to look about him, but leaned on the table with his face buried in his hands. He had seen his friend but for one short day and night, and now he was gone for ever—passed away like a dream ! And this was the end of the kindest and most magnanimous of human beings ! Could it, indeed, be true, that he was gone to meet his doom on the scaffold, and at this moment was no longer a dweller on earth ? Alas ! there stood his vacant chair, there was the glass, out of which he had drank his last draught of wine, even the echoes of his voice had hardly yet ceased to vibrate on the young man's ear !

Alphonse was roused from the state of stupefaction into which he had fallen, by the reappear-

ance of the jailer, who brought with him the materials for breakfast. The mourner surveyed him with a shudder, but making a strenuous attempt at self-command, he exclaimed in hoarse, abrupt tones :

“ Is it true ?—but why do I ask the question ? Yes, he is gone—the gentle, the generous old man ! Speak, fellow ! you know what I would ask.”

“ If you mean your fellow-prisoner who quitted you this morning,” replied the jailer, “ he is quiet enough now, and so are those who went with him from the room below. They will never again have it in their power to conspire against the Republic.”

“ It is false, wretch !” said Alphonse, passionately, “ my friend was only too faithful to that accursed Republic ; had he been less conscientious, he might have been alive at this moment.”

“ Well, well,” rejoined the jailer, with a surly show of respect, “ I have no quarrel with the poor gentleman ; he was civil enough to me, and could I have had my way, not a hair of his head should have been harmed.”

“ You feel for him, then, and lament his execution ?” said Alphonse, softened by the tone in which this last remark was made.

“ Why, as to that matter,” replied the worthy official, with a significant shrug of the shoulders, “ I always make a point of feeling for those who

are civilly disposed towards me. But feeling, you know, citizen, is one thing, and duty another. I have a good heart, but business must be attended to. The old gentleman shook me very politely by the hand, when he turned to get into the cart, which shows that he must have been well pleased with my treatment of him. But I am forgetting what I came about. Colonel Destouche is below, and requested me to ask whether you would grant him an interview for a few minutes."

"Colonel who?" asked Alphonse, for in his bewilderment he had totally forgotten all about the Colonel.

"Destouche," repeated the jailer, surprized at this absence of mind; "the same who consigned you to my custody."

"Oh! true—true," said Alphonse: "tell him I will see him."

On his entrance, the Colonel embraced the young royalist with much cordiality; and observing the haggard expression of his countenance, said, kindly:

"This confinement disagrees with you, I see; but cheer up, for I think I may venture to promise that it will not be of much longer continuance."

"It is not my imprisonment that troubles me," rejoined Alphonse, "but I have this morning lost by the abhorred guillotine the best and oldest friend I ever had."

“I am sorry for you,” said the Colonel, with true military *sang-froid*, “but it can’t be helped; in periods of national convulsion, these things are quite matters of course. I, too, lost a friend in the late desperate conflict in the suburbs—a fine fellow, brave as a lion—yet you see I have not broken my heart about him. But now for our own matters. I have seen General Canclaux, and have prevailed on him to use his interest in your behalf, with the chief Judge of the Revolutionary Tribunal.”

“If my fate is to depend on him, I am lost,” said Alphonse.

“You take too desponding a view of your case,” resumed Destouche; “Canclaux’s influence is all powerful with the tribunal, and for my sake he will exert it to the utmost. But I assure you, I had no little difficulty with him; for when he heard that you were a De Chatillon, he made many wry faces, and swallowed my proposal as if it had been so much physic. When, however, I put it on the score of a personal favour to myself, and acquainted him, besides, with your father’s generosity to our mutual friend St. Lambert, he no longer hesitated to comply with my request. He has now gone to have an interview with the Judges, who claim authority over all prisoners, whether military or political; and this evening, or to-morrow at furthest, I hope to be able to an-

nounce to you that you are liberated on parole. Adieu ! Keep up your spirits, and expect my speedy return.”

No sooner was the Colonel gone, than Alphonse relapsed into his former state of gloom. He took up Servette’s book, with a view to divert his grief by reading; but this only made matters worse, for the old man’s handwriting was in the margin of many of the pages; so kissing the volume reverently, he placed it within the folds of his dress next his heart. The whole of that day and night, he did nothing but dwell on his departed friend, and at times almost persuaded himself that he saw him sitting by his side, and heard the tones of his low, plaintive voice. Towards morning, however, he dropped off into sleep—the profound sleep of exhaustion—and when he woke, it was with recruited strength, and spirits much improved.

At the usual hour the jailer appeared with the morning’s repast, and with him came Colonel Destouche, who throwing himself abruptly into a seat, maintained a perfect silence till the official had quitted the room. He then, with marked emotions, addressed Alphonse, who, observing his agitated manner, was at no loss to guess the cause.

“ De Chatillon,” said the Colonel, “ I am the bearer of news, which it cannot be more painful for you to hear than for me to communicate.

General Canclaux has seen the revolutionary Judges, but, alas—"

"You need not proceed," interrupted Alphonse, with a smile, "for I can anticipate the result of the General's application. He has failed, and the Tribunal are resolved that the utmost vengeance of the law shall be inflicted on such a terrible royalist chief as De Chatillon."

"Your anticipations are but too well founded," replied Destouche. "Had you been a mere subaltern, the Judges, in compliment to Canclaux, would have set you free without a word; but regarding you as one of the most active and influential of the Seigneurs, they say they dare not take upon themselves such a responsibility. It is decided, therefore, that you shall appear before them to-morrow, which I need not add, is but a preliminary step to the scaffold. The General, for my sake, pleaded warmly in your favour, but he might as well have pleaded to statues, as to these upstart, sanguinary officials who are bringing dishonour on the republican cause throughout Europe."

"Be composed," said Alphonse, calmly, "you have done all that a true friend could do."

"Done all!" exclaimed Destouche, regarding his companion with a look almost of severity. "No, Monsieur de Chatillon, I have not done all! Do you forget that I pledged my honour for your life? If you do, I do not!"

“Your pledge,” replied Alphonse, wishing to put the Colonel, as much as possible, at ease with himself, “your pledge implied no more than that you would do your best to save my life. Well, you have done so, and if you have failed, the failure is no impeachment of your honour.”

“My considerate—my noble friend,” exclaimed Destouche, affected almost to tears by this delicate mode of looking at the question, “I know your motive in thus expressing yourself, but it cannot blind me to the fact that my honour is impeached, if your life is sacrificed. Did I need further inducement to befriend you, this conduct of yours would furnish me with it. But my mind was already made up when I heard Canclaux’s report. You must escape from these walls, and I must assist you in the enterprize.”

“But you will be compromized by conniving at my flight,” observed Alphonse.

“I have no apprehension on that score; keep your own secret, and I will keep mine. Besides,” added the Colonel, “a soldier of the Republic can have no hesitation, in assisting a royalist friend to escape from the clutches of ignorant, reckless despots, who confound the innocent with the guilty in one indiscriminate massacre. Canclaux, I know, entertains precisely the same feelings; but of course he cannot and will not appear in the matter, nor indeed have I thought it prudent to communicate to him my design.”

“Colonel Destouche,” replied Alphonse, with emotion, “your sentiments are such as I was prepared to expect from you, and I thank you from my heart. But though I will certainly accept my life at your hands, yet I will not do so at the risk of your safety.”

“Be satisfied,” said Destouche, “that when I laid my plan, which I did the very instant I heard from Canclaux the decision of the judges, I took all due precautions. And now for the particulars of this plan. Have you ever by any chance seen the jailer’s niece since you have been here?”

“Never.”

“Well, no matter. A young soldier of my troop who acts as my factotum, and on whose prudence and good faith I may implicitly rely, is, it seems, a favoured gallant of this girl—a fact which I only learned this morning, when, after much serious consideration, I decided on confiding to him my project. Now, as Louis has great influence over her, and described her to me as a bold, lively good-hearted, grenadier-sort of a lass, very likely to befriend such a handsome fellow as yourself, I have already dispatched him to sound her on the subject; and if he finds her willing to assist, he will bring her here this evening, when you and she will exchange clothes, and Louis in his quality of gallant will accompany you to the prison gates, and not leave you till he sees you safe out of the city.”

“But what, meantime, is to become of the poor girl?” asked Alphonse.

“Oh, no harm will come to her,” replied Destouche, “for she is her uncle’s favourite, who indulges her in all her whims.”

“Really the scheme looks feasible,” said Alphonse, “and is, I think, very likely to answer.”

“Answer!” replied the Colonel, gaily; “it must—it shall answer; but should you ever again become my prisoner, trust me, much as I may respect you, I will volunteer no more hasty pledges for your safety. And now I must go and consult with Louis, and see that all is duly prepared. Meanwhile, be sure you show no excitement when the jailer comes in with your meals, but maintain your usual equanimity, and expect your visitors at nightfall.”

Immediately on quitting Alphonse, Destouche went back to his quarters, anxiously expecting the return of his man, Louis. He soon made his appearance, and his report was in the highest degree encouraging. He had seen the jailer’s niece, he said, and when she learned that the prisoner was young, handsome, brave, and, above all, well-born, she expressed her perfect readiness to assist him in making his escape; and it was, accordingly, agreed between them, that her gallant should pay her his usual evening visit at the prison, when she promised that by some means or other she would

contrive a satisfactory pretext for accompanying him to Alphonse's apartment.

While this scheme was in preparation, Alphonse, whose acute grief, for the loss of his friend, had been somewhat moderated by this new impulse given to his feelings, and who was now burning with an ardent desire to avenge his murder, kept restlessly pacing the floor of his room for hours together, counting each stroke of the clock, watching with indescribable interest the gradual lengthening of the shadows on the wall, and wondering whether the day would ever come to a close.

Noon had passed, and it was now the hour when either the jailer or one of his assistants usually presented themselves in the young royalist's apartment, with his dinner. But the former was snugly located in his own private room, enjoying the refreshment of a strong glass of Nantz. His niece was seated beside him, and was just what Louis had described her to be—a buxom lass, with a roguish twinkle in her eye, and a countenance expressive of good-humour.

“ Well,” said the jailer, sipping his glass with exceeding unction, “ this is right good stuff, so make me some more of it, girl. I have earned the right to enjoy myself, for the last week has been a busy one; I wish the Tribunal would send the prisoners to the guillotine at once, without first sending them here, for I don't half like the parting

scenes I have witnessed lately ; they hurt my feelings, and what is worse, they disturb my digestion."

"Ah, uncle, you are not half so good a republican as I am!" said his niece, archly.

"How so, Marie?" replied the jailer.

"Why you pity the worst enemies of the Republic," resumed the girl, "and I do verily believe that if it rested with you, you would save all their lives. Now I would inflict on them the heaviest punishment, and more especially, would I exterminate those horrid Vendean Seigneurs who have done so much mischief of late."

"Right, Marie, that's good—that's excellent! I did but speak in jest, child. Be sure, I'm not the man to consult my own feelings at the expense of the people's interest. We must sacrifice everything to them, even our own lives, if necessary. Ah, patriotism is a fine thing—a very fine thing indeed! Isn't it, Marie? And when did you last see that young republican soldier who seems to have taken such a fancy to you? Now, don't blush"—there was no occasion to make this request, for excessive modesty was not one of the lady's infirmities—"it's quite natural that a smart young fellow should like a smart young girl. But be prudent, child; no nonsense—ascertain what the man's intentions are before you give him up your heart. I have no notion of a niece of mine throwing herself away."

The only reply that Marie vouchsafed to this sage admonition was, that she had seen Louis that morning, and that he had promised to call on her in the evening, in order to take her to the theatre, which, at this tumultuous period, was nightly crowded to overflowing.

“ I wish I could accompany you,” said the jailer ; “ but business must be attended to. And that reminds me, that I have not yet taken up the young royalist’s dinner.”

“ What, have you a royalist—a Vendean royalist in the prison ? ” asked Marie, with a look of assumed horror.

“ Yes, child, and apparently one of rank,” replied the jailer ; “ but I have orders to treat him civilly, so I suppose he can’t be so guilty as some others of his party.”

“ The monster ! I should like so to see him ! ” exclaimed Marie.

“ Oh, the curiosity of woman,” said the jailer, waggishly ; “ but you can’t see this monster, Marie, though for my part I must confess I see nothing monstrous about him.”

A gentle knock at the door was here heard, and Louis made his appearance.

“ I’m so glad you’re come,” exclaimed Marie, eagerly ; “ who do you suppose we have got in the prison ? One of those terrible Vendean Seigneurs who have given so much trouble to the Republic.”

“ I hope it won’t be long before the guillotine gives him his *quietus*,” said Louis.

“ Capital,” exclaimed the jailer; “ why you are as stanch a republican as Marie. And so you are going to escort her to the theatre to-night?”

“ Yes,” replied Louis, with a significant look at the girl.

“ But I will not stir a step,” said Marie, returning her lover’s glance, “ until I have seen this horrid Seigneur, if only that I may have the pleasure of speaking my mind to him, and perhaps giving him a sly pinch to show how I hate him. Why cannot I carry up his dinner, as well as you? If you are afraid of trusting me alone with him, Louis will accompany me; so do, dear uncle, let me go; I have never yet seen a real Vendean Seigneur. I dare say, he is some ferocious looking monster, with an enormous black, bushy beard, and eyes as big as saucers.”

“ You are a little wheedling, artful minx,” replied the jailer, smiling complacently on his niece, “ but it won’t do, Marie, I must go myself;” and he got up from his chair, and made a lazy move towards the door. His disinclination, however, to leave his favourite cordial, though only for a few minutes, was too strong for his sense of duty, and accordingly he reseated himself, observing: “ Come, girl, I’ll tell you what you shall do; instead of seeing the prisoner, you shall see after

his dinner in the kitchen, and bring it in here on a tray, and then all I shall have to do, will be to carry it up to him, as the turnkey is unfortunately out."

With a shrewd, expressive glance at Louis, Marie withdrew to do her uncle's bidding; and when she was gone, her gallant insisted on tasting the Nantz, which gave the jailer an excellent excuse for joining him. On his niece's return, she found her worthy kinsman so highly satisfied with his position, that he had less inclination to move than ever; and having been in the interim overpersuaded by Louis, who pretended to be greatly surprized, at the idea of his refusing Marie such a trifling favour, he at length consented that she should act as his substitute, and gave her the key of the prisoner's room; but insisted, for the better security of all parties, that Louis should accompany her.

Twilight had now fallen, and Alphonse was still pacing the floor of his apartment, under feelings of excitement, which at times threatened to overpower his cooler judgment, when he heard foot-steps approaching the door. Presently the key was applied to the lock, the massive outer bars were withdrawn, and a smart, good-humoured looking young man entered, followed by a tall, stout, lively girl, who carried a small tray, on which were placed wine and other dinner *et cæteras*.

Alphonse looked steadily into the young man's

face, and being much encouraged by its frank, cordial expression, said: "You come from—" but here he stopped, feeling that he had no right to mention Colonel Destouche's name in the presence of a third party, or in any way mix him up with the transaction.

"I understand you, Monsieur," replied Louis, with a knowing wink, "it's all right. But we have no time to spare—Marie," he added, turning to the girl, who being a great admirer of manly beauty, had been gazing with much interest on Alphonse's handsome countenance; "Marie, withdraw into the next room. You know what to do quite as well as I can tell you. Come, no hesitation, for every moment is of consequence."

The girl, with some small blushing, immediately slipped into the adjoining apartment—or cupboard, rather, which did duty as a bed-room, and handed out to Louis through the door, which was just ajar, her outer garments, together with her bonnet and a huge coarse shawl, which nearly enveloped her person. Alphonse proceeded, forthwith, to equip himself in these embarrassing habiliments, in which he was assisted by Louis, who then delivered to Marie those portions of the young Seigneur's dress which he had taken off.

The exchange was soon completed, and the girl came forth, attired in full military costume, and cutting a less preposterous figure than might

have been expected. Not so, with Alphonse, however, whose awkward manner of wearing his disguise highly diverted his companions.

“Oh, that will never do, Monsieur!” said Marie, going up to him with a half-sheepish air; “I never wear my shawl in that strange fashion; and the bonnet—mercy on us, you have put the front part behind!”

The prisoner waited, with the most exemplary patience and docility, while the eccentricities of his toilette were being set right; and when the task was completed, by way of testifying his sense of gratitude, he imprinted a kiss on the girl’s unaverted cheek, which elicited a smile, together with a whispered remonstrance of: “Fie, for shame, Monsieur!”

After critically examining Alphonse’s equipment, from head to foot, Louis observed:

“I fear, Monseigneur, we shall still have some trouble in escaping detection, for that gown is not long enough for you—and, then, those boots!—and Marie’s shoes of course will not fit you.”

“I should think not, indeed; they are a thousand times too small!” exclaimed the girl, with a saucy toss of the head, for she was proud of her slender and delicately-formed feet.

“I must take my chance,” replied Alphonse; “but, I doubt not, all will go well, for it is now so dark that no one will be likely to detect me, either in the prison or the streets.”

“True, the darkness is in our favour,” said Louis ; “and that is our only chance. But come, Monseigneur, help yourself to a mouthful of meat and a glass of wine ; and then let us be off, for the jailer will be calling for us presently.”

With some difficulty, Alphonse, whose anxious state of mind had wholly deprived him of appetite, contrived to swallow a few mouthfuls of meat and bread, which he washed down with a hearty draught of very indifferent wine ; and when he had finished his meagre repast, Louis slipped a concealed pistol into his hand, reserving another for himself, in case of emergency. And then the prisoner, having taken a kind leave of the girl, who remained behind, made his way down stairs, while Louis carefully locked and barred the door after him.

Luckily they met with no interruption in their descent ; but when they reached the passage which led to the jailer’s private apartment, Louis halted, and said in a whisper to his companion :

“I must go in, and return the crafty old fox his keys, or he will be sure to suspect something. You, too, must accompany me ; but you need not advance beyond the door, for the sight of your female attire will satisfy him that all is right.”

“But suppose he should insist on my sitting down with him ?” suggested Alphonse.

“He will not do that,” replied Louis, “for he

knows I am going to escort you to the theatre ; so keep up your self-possession, and leave me to be the spokesman.”

With these words they moved forward, till they reached the jailer’s room, when Louis boldly entering, while his companion stood in the doorway, said :

“ I have brought you back the keys ; and Marie has seen quite enough of your prisoner. She was very severe on him—too much so, I think, for really the man looked as meek and innocent as a lamb.”

“ Marie is a good girl, and a true republican,” replied the jailer, whose potations had somewhat impaired his powers of vision. “ Come in, child, and sit down awhile.”

“ No, no,” said Louis eagerly, “ we must be off this instant, or the first piece will be concluded,” and without another word, he pushed Alphonse before him into the passage ; and with a brief, unceremonious good-bye to the jailer, shut the door, and hurried away after him.

They crossed the yard unperceived by any one ; but when they came to the front gates of the prison, they found, to their annoyance, that the porter was absent from his post.

“ A curse on the fellow,” muttered Louis ; “ here is a dilemma ! What is to be done now ? Stay, I have it—go and conceal yourself, Mon-

seigneur, behind that buttress there," pointing to a small projection in the wall, near the gates, "while I run back, and look for this negligent dog."

Alphonse instantly retreated to the spot indicated, where he squeezed himself into as small a compass as possible; and in a few minutes he had the satisfaction of hearing Louis return, with the porter, whom he rated in no measured terms for his negligence in keeping him and the jailer's niece so long waiting.

"You must have known," he said, "that I was still in the prison, for you opened the gates to me only an hour or two ago."

"I am sorry to say, citizen, I had forgotten all about it," replied the porter.

"Well, never mind—there is no great harm done," rejoined Louis; "but now, open the gates, and be quick about it. Here, Marie—Marie! Where is that silly girl gone? Hiding herself somewhere, I'll warrant, in one of her childish frolics. Marie!"

The disguised Alphonse immediately came forward, and the gates being by this time thrown open, Louis hurried him through them, while the porter cracked divers common-place jokes, as they disappeared, of which nothing was audible but the brilliant remark that "Girls are always playing some fool's trick or other!"

CHAPTER XI.

“HEAVEN be praised!” exclaimed Alphonse, with an irrepressible burst of joy, “I am once again at liberty. Now, my poor friend Servette, I shall find the means of avenging you!”

“Softly, softly,” whispered his companion; “remember, you are not yet beyond the chances of arrest. The utmost caution is still necessary, and you must bear in mind, too, that you are a woman, not a man, and regulate your pace accordingly. So, lean decorously on my arm, Monsieur, and strive to adopt the mincing pace of a young girl.”

Alphonse took the hint, and acquitted himself with tolerable success, though, occasionally, impulse prevailed over discretion, and he broke out into an abrupt, haughty stride, which Louis had some difficulty in checking.

As they passed the open space where the guil-

lotine stood, and which was feebly lit up by two dingy lamps, Alphonse, remembering the recent fate of his old preceptor, regarded it with a look of intense horror and loathing, and flew past at such a rate, that Louis was again compelled to check him, and whisper in his ear: "Pray, Monseigneur, be cautious; that sentinel on guard at the scaffold has his eye on us already, and if you do not moderate your pace, he will suspect something, and I need not tell you what will be the consequence."

"Thanks for your well-timed hint," said Alphonse. "This cursed gown gets between my legs so, that I am constantly in fear of measuring my length on the ground."

"Ah, the women are cleverer than we are in these matters," observed Louis, archly, "for they, especially when married, can manage to wear the breeches, while we make sad clumsy work with the petticoat. But never mind the gown just now, when we get into a quieter part of the town, you can tuck it up as high as you please."

They had soon traversed the space which enclosed the guillotine, and turned into the old-fashioned street, "La Juiverie," so called from its having been, in ancient times, the quarter assigned to the residence of the Jews, and in which they were shut up at night. Here they found a riotous mob assembled, singing revolutionary airs, and

dancing the Carmagnole in all the wildness of intoxication. They were of the very lowest class, and not a few among them were women, who insulted every respectable individual that passed, and indulged in the grossest blasphemies and obscenities.

“This is an awkward business,” said Louis, involuntarily halting, and grasping his companion’s arm; “yet we must make our way through the crowd, for this is the direction that the Colonel ordered me to take.”

“Did he say he would join us, then?” asked Alphonse, in a whisper.

“He promised me,” replied Louis, “that he would meet us at the Quai d’Aiguillon, in order that he might be personally assured of your safety, and the hour at which he expected us is close at hand, so we must put a bold face on the matter and push forward.”

Thus speaking, he walked briskly towards the mob, with Alphonse leaning on his arm, and by way of disarming any suspicion that might have arisen as to their characters, he began humming the Marseillaise Hymn.

When they came up with the mob, who nearly filled the centre of the street, two tipsy women staggered towards them, and insisted on their joining them in the dance.

"Not now," exclaimed Louis, assuming a familiar tone, and chucking one of them knowingly under the chin; "we have no time to spare for dancing the Carmagnole or any other dance, so let us go, my pretty girl."

This was said to a lank, gaunt, middle-aged woman, remarkable for her exquisite ugliness, but unluckily the compliment had a different effect to that which the speaker had anticipated, for it so far gratified the prepossessing nymph, that she was more resolved, than ever, not to let Louis escape the distinguished honour of being her partner, so saying, "We must dance together," she laid the violent hand of possession on him, at the same time bawling out to a ruffian near her to come and "have a frisk" with the girl.

Finding that there was no help for it, Louis, in the true spirit of a philosopher, resigned himself to his destiny, and was twirled about with prodigious energy by his partner, whom he had no slight difficulty in keeping up, for she swayed terribly from the perpendicular, and more than once threatened to bear him down with her to the ground. Alphonse was in a hardly less enviable position, for he was pounced upon by a brawny vagabond, with one eye, whose breath in no degree resembled the perfume of violets; and he had no easy task in preventing the fellow from indulging him with a

kiss, by way of pleasantly commencing operations. It was fortunate that the night was so dark, for had it been otherwise, the awkward movements of the disguised young Seigneur would infallibly have caused his detection, and he would have been torn in pieces by the excited mob, who, after a momentary halt, were now all again in brisk motion, shouting, laughing, swearing, and tumbling up against each other, like so many frantic Bacchanals.

While the mob were thus gracefully occupied, and Alphonse was making the most desperate efforts to extricate himself from his Cyclops of a partner, a tremendous uproar arose at the other end of the street, and a another band of *sans-culottes* approached, dancing and singing round a large wooden board, as it seemed, which was supported on the shoulders of four men, and on which was placed a half-naked body. When this band, a few of whom carried torches in their hands, reached the spot where their congenial friends were capering about with such unstudied elegance of movement, they stopped and ordered the bearers to put down their burden.

Alphonse, at this moment, chanced to be standing close to the spot where the board was deposited ; and no sooner did his glance fall on the corpse, which was gashed with innumerable wounds, than he recognized, by the light of the torches, which

were lowered so as to throw a strong glare upon it, the features of a Vendean peasant, who had fought side by side with him in the desperate conflict in the suburbs.

His exclamation of surprize and horror attracted the attention of a by-stander, who, misinterpreting the cause of his emotion, said :

“ Ay, the wretch deserved his fate, as you observe—or rather as you were going to observe, when I interrupted you—for he was a villainous royalist, who, having made his escape from the late battle, had contrived to secrete himself till about an hour ago, when we caught him skulking about the market-place. He thought, the fool, that we should content ourselves with handing him over to the Revolutionary Tribunal ; but when once we had got him in our clutches, we resolved to make sure and short work with him, and save the authorities some trouble. I don’t think he’s likely to give any more annoyance to the Republic !”

At this, there was a ferocious yell of exultation from the mob, some of whom, pressing round the corpse, began kicking it about, as though it had been a foot-ball.

“ Wretches !” exclaimed Alphonse, transported beyond all self-control at this act of savage brutality.

A low voice here whispered in his ear. It was Louis, who, anticipating some such outbreak, had stolen up to him, unobserved by his fascinating partner.

“ Monseigneur,” he said, “ remember who you are and where you are, and do not risk both our lives.”

The words were fortunately unheard except by him to whom they were addressed ; but the indignant term “ wretches !” which Alphonse had shouted out, in terms by no means feminine in their quality, roused the bile of the ruffian who had just spoken.

“ What, my girl,” he exclaimed, “ are you a favourer of the royalists ? If I thought so, I should be strongly tempted to serve you as we have already served this Vendean rascal.”

“ Bah, don’t be angry with the wench,” said another *sans-culotte*, with a coarse laugh, “ these women never know their own minds for two minutes together. Come, give me a kiss, now, for taking your part so handsomely,” and he flung his arms round Alphonse’s neck.

Quick as thought, the disguised chief resented the fellow’s impertinence, by dealing him a blow which felled him to the ground ; and turning to Louis, who stood trembling for the consequence of such rashness, he said :

“ I can endure this no longer, so we must force our way through the *canaille* at all risks.”

Thus saying, he rushed from the spot, elbowing his way through the crowd, with an unceremonious vigour that bore down all opposition, and followed

by Louis, who, as his sole remaining chance of safety, kept shouting out the chorus of the "Marseillaise" at every step of his progress.

They might, possibly, have succeeded in escaping without further molestation, had it not been for the fellow whom Alphonse had knocked down, and who no sooner got upon his legs again, than he darted after the fugitives, with the cowardly determination of being revenged upon the supposed girl who had turned the laugh against him. He came up with Alphonse just as he had extricated himself from the pressure of the mob, and was all but clear of it; and fixing a rough grasp on his shoulder, began shaking him with great violence. ~

"Shame, shame!" exclaimed Louis, pressing Alphonse by the elbow, as a hint to him to be quiet and leave the matter in his hands. "Is it thus you treat a girl? Hands off, I say! she is under my protection, and I will not have her molested."

"Molested!" replied the ruffian, still retaining his hold on Alphonse, who had tact enough to content himself with a faint resistance, "egad, I am the one that has been molested. To think that a woman's arm should have strength enough to deal me such a blow! Why, my head spun round like the body of that royalist whom we strung up the other day to the lamp-post! Now, no struggling, my girl; you and I must know more of each other before we part, for, do you

know, I half suspect you are not what you would wish to be thought," and he began dragging the young Seigneur towards the torch-lights, despite all the resistance he could make, and the protestations, remonstrances, and even menaces of Louis.

While this was going forward, some of the mob coolly looked on and laughed, while others, who had still some little regard left for the fair sex, loudly called on the fellow to leave the girl alone, to which he made no other reply than a brutal shout of defiance. He had dragged Alphonse some two or three yards back towards the corpse, round which the majority of the crowd were gathered, listening delightedly to the harangue of a beetled-browed vagabond, who was delivering a mock funeral sermon over it; when the young Royalist no longer able to control his passions, drew a pistol from his breast, and was about to level it at his tormentor's head, when Louis, who saw the action—as did also the other who started back with astonishment—struck the weapon down, exclaiming, as he did so, with well-feigned indignation :

" Now, this is really too bad, Marie. I know when your blood is up that you are a perfect virago, like the rest of your sex; but murder! the murder, too, of a good republican, whose only fault is admiring you!—you must reserve these tricks for the royalists, whom you hate as much as I do

And for you, friend, take my advice and leave this girl alone, for you don't know what a devil she is when once her passions are fully roused."

"Devil or no devil, I'll not part with her," replied the fellow, and suddenly catching Alphonse by both wrists, he again pressed him forwards, and as he did so, he roared out at the top of his voice : " bring hither one of the torches, that I may take a look at this delicate creature who has just attempted my life."

It was a critical moment. Both Louis and his companion had given themselves up for lost, and were resolved to sell their lives as dearly as possible, with which view the former had drawn forth his pistol, and pointing it at the head of his adversary, said :

" If you will not let go your hold of my sister, here's that which shall force you ;" when, before he could put his threat into execution, the attention of the mob, who had begun to cluster round the disputants, was diverted by the loud and fierce ringing of the alarm-bell of the prison, accompanied by the beating of drums.

" The prisoners have escaped !" shouted a dozen hoarse voices, " or else they are massacreing the jailer and his assistants. Quick, friends, let us fly to their assistance !" and away rushed the majority of the mob, leaving the mangled corpse in the middle of the street, in comparative darkness and solitude.

Availing themselves of this lucky turn in their favour, Louis and Alphonse shook off the ruffian who still kept his hold of the latter, but as he seemed doggedly bent on renewing the struggle, Louis dealt him a blow with the butt-end of his heavy pistol which stretched him senseless on the ground, and then said to his companion :

“ Now, Monseigneur, is our only remaining chance of escape ; for your flight has been discovered, and in half an hour you will have all the civil and military authorities in an uproar.”

There needed no further stimulus to exertion, and away they both flew, Louis leading the way through the most retired streets, until at length they stood, panting and breathless, on the Quai d’Aiguillon.

At the hour at which they reached the Quai it was in a great degree deserted. The constant bustle going on, in the day-time, in its warehouses and magazines for maritime stores had ceased ; and only two small trading vessels were lying alongside of it, the faint lights in whose cabins showed that the crews were below deck.

“ Are you quite sure,” asked Alphonse in a whisper of his companion, as they walked up and down the Quai, keeping a vigilant look-out, “ are you quite sure that it was at this place the Colonel appointed to meet us ? I see no symptoms of him, and it is dangerous to be seen loitering about

here ; nevertheless, I cannot think of going away without once more expressing my acknowledgments to him."

Before he had done speaking, a tall figure muffled up in a military cloak, moved from under the shadow of one of the warehouses, and after looking cautiously about him, came forward in the direction where the fugitive and his guide were now standing.

"It is the Colonel !" exclaimed Louis. "Let us go and meet him."

A very few words sufficed to explain to Destouche, the cause of the unexpected delay that had occurred, who whispering to Louis to follow them, and see that no one was on the watch, preceded Alphonse along the Quai in silence, towards a flight of steps which led down to the water's edge.

Here they found a small boat moored, which the provident Colonel told Alphonse he had stationed there for his accommodation, and that he would find oars in it with which he must manage to make his way down the river, till he had got completely clear of Nantes and the suburban villages. He then cordially embraced him, adding :

"Situated as I am, I dare not venture further with you, nor can I even spare Louis, who must lie hid for awhile until this affair has blown over, otherwise he will be arrested as an accomplice in

your escape, and I too shall be compromised. But you will not have much need of our assistance, for you will soon reach the open country, and then you will be free to go wherever your inclinations lead. Adieu, my friend, and do not forget that the republican Destouche has kept faith with the royalist De Chatillon."

" You have indeed nobly redeemed your pledge," replied Alphonse, fervently ; " and never, to the latest hour of my life, shall I forget your kindness. I cannot say, may God prosper your cause ; but I do, from my very soul, wish you health, happiness and worldly distinction. Adieu ! and assure yourself of the undying gratitude of all who bear the name of De Chatillon. And you, too, my friend," addressing Louis, " you have claims on me which I feel I can never too warmly or too readily acknowledge ; for had it not been for your courage and self-possession, this night had been the last of my existence." And shaking him heartily by the hand, the fugitive stepped into the boat and pushed off from shore, while the Colonel and his servant stood watching it, as it floated down the current, till it was lost in the haze of distance.

CHAPTER XII.

WITHIN eight days, from the time of his flight from Nantes, Alphonse, after more than once narrowly escaping being recaptured by a roving band of republican marauders—deserters from Westermann's army—reached the head-quarters of the Royalists, who had taken up a position in the neighbourhood of Torfou—a village destined soon to be immortalized by one of the most splendid of their victories. Brief as had been the period of the young chief's absence from them, more than one battle had been fought, with the shattered remnants of the enemy's troops; indeed the Vendean had been engaged in constant skirmishes ever since their retreat from Nantes; and now, notwithstanding their diminished numbers, they had resolved to make a decided stand against Westermann, who having collected as strong a force as could be got together, was marching in person against the chiefs, with the

firm determination of trusting everything to the fortune of a pitched battle.

It was seldom that the Vendéans ventured to fight in the open plain, for such a mode of warfare was foreign to their habits; but the Seigneurs, after duly debating the matter in council, had succeeded in prevailing on them to risk the experiment, as it was necessary to strike a final, decisive blow against Westermann; and they were now encamped on an open, ridgy tract of moor-land, which was bounded in one direction by a wood, and in another by fields, and was within a stone's-throw of Torfou, where some of the troops were quartered.

It was on the day previously to the battle, that Alphonse arrived, having contrived to change his disguise in one of the small towns through which he passed, and which was still in the possession of the Royalists; and the news of his return having soon spread through the camp, he was welcomed with enthusiasm by the peasantry, and more especially by the young heroine, Victoire, who could not restrain her tears of joy at his unexpected reappearance in the camp.

The chiefs, at this moment, were assembled together in the tent of D'Elbée, when, roused by the loud shouts of their men, they rushed forth with drawn swords, under an apprehension that the enemy had surprized them, but were

not less astonished than delighted, when they saw Alphonse advancing towards them, followed by a large body of the peasantry. In a few hurried, eager words, the young Seigneur explained the means by which he had effected his escape from imprisonment, which greatly excited the interest of his brother chiefs, who, one and all, expressed their admiration of the conduct of Colonel Destouche. The Marquis, in particular, with the tears streaming down his cheeks, was unbounded in his expressions of gratitude, adding, however—so inveterate were his prejudices against the republicans—that it was impossible so generous a man could be other than a royalist at heart.

“But where are Charette and De Lescure,” inquired Alphonse of his father, “that they do not come forward to welcome me? I trust they have not met the fate of poor Cathelineau.”

“My cousin and Charette set out, a day or two since, to disperse a small republican force that had made its appearance in the neighbourhood,” replied De Larochejaquelein; “but we are in hourly expectation of their return.”

“They are fully aware of our situation,” observed D’Elbée, “and will, I am persuaded, make every effort to rejoin us as soon as possible.”

While the General was speaking, a peasant rushed up, breathless with haste, and informed the chiefs that Kleber, at the head of a detachment

of the army of Mayence, had just effected a junction with Westermann, and that the two divisions were now hastening, by forced marches, towards Torfou. “I saw them myself this day, at noon,” added the speaker; “and at the rate at which they were then moving, they will be here within two hours.”

“I would not desire to hear better news,” exclaimed Henri, casting a proud and confident glance at the Marquis and his son, “for our troops were never in better spirits, nor their equipments more complete.”

“But for all that,” said D’Elbée, “we are not strong enough to give battle without Charette and De Lescure,” and motioning to the peasant to retire, he led the way back to his tent, whither the rest of the chiefs accompanied him.

The conversation that ensued between them was long and animated, and turned principally on the question whether or not they should give quarter in the approaching conflict. Stofflet, who came in while they were in the midst of the discussion, was decidedly opposed to clemency, and his opinion was supported by the elder De Châtillon, who burst out in his usual bold and peremptory manner: “Give quarter indeed!—No. What claims have the republicans on our forbearance? Look at our devastated fields, our blazing villages, our persecuted priests, our outraged wives and

daughters ! Is it to wretches who could be guilty of atrocities like these, that we should give quarter ? Never ? We will hunt them down as if they were wolves. Speak, Henri, I know you generally think as I do."

The young chief was embarrassed for a reply, and as he stole a glance at the countenance of Alphonse, which expressed a sentiment at variance with that of his stern father, he became still more so. The innate generosity of his spirit would have induced him to give quarter to the enemy ; but when he called to mind the outrages of which, in his progress through the district, he had been the eye-witness, he was strongly tempted to regard clemency as an act of weakness. Before he could decide upon an answer to the question so abruptly put to him, D'Elbée exclaimed with his wonted blandness, " I am sorry, Marquis, to differ both with you and Stofflet on this matter, but I think that policy—to say nothing of higher considerations—requires that we should still continue to temper justice with mercy. Let us fight the battle to the last, resolved either to conquer or perish ; but when the heat of the struggle is over, let us not murder in cold blood those whom the fortune of war may place at our disposal. Our cause is so good, that it can gain nothing, but may lose much, by undue severity."

" The General speaks my sentiments," said

Alphonse, looking deferentially towards his father. “I cannot see what advantage is to be derived from our lowering ourselves to the level of the republicans.”

“This is sheer folly,” exclaimed the Marquis, impetuously. “I myself commenced the war on the principle of clemency, and the consequence was that I became the means of letting loose a band of desperadoes, who have ever since been sweeping over the Bocage like a pestilence. No more quarter. The country cannot be too soon rid of the republican cut-throats who infest it.”

“Well said, Marquis de Chatillon!” exclaimed Stofflet. “What you recommend, I will take care to enforce. I have sworn to avenge the death of the brave Cathelineau, and I will keep my oath. But look, my friends—what red light is that shining in here so brightly? It cannot be the sun, for the west is dark with clouds.”

As Stofflet spoke, he drew back the curtains of the tent, when a terrific spectacle presented itself. The sky, in one quarter, seemed all on fire, glowing with a deep red glare, while ever and anon millions of sparks shot up, as if from the crater of a volcano, accompanied by immense volumes of smoke, which, driven by the wind, came drifting in the direction of Torfou. The sight had attracted the notice of the whole Vendéan camp, and loud, indignant execrations burst from the assembled

thousands at this fresh proof of republican barbarity. Apparently, the conflagration proceeded from some small town or village, situated on rising ground, at the distance of four or five miles, and from its extent and fierceness it was evident that few, if any, of the houses had escaped the flames.

When the troops saw their chiefs gazing in expressive silence at the spectacle, outside D'Elbée's tent, a numerous body of them rushed up to the General; and forgetful, in the passion of the moment, of every prudential consideration, demanded clamorously, to be led against the enemy.

"Wait but till to-morrow, my friends," said the Marquis, delighted with the spirit they evinced, "and your wishes shall be gratified to the fullest extent. But to move, just now, would be a hazardous step, more especially as our expected reinforcements have not yet arrived."

"And no more mercy to the prisoners!" roared a hundred hoarse voices.

"You hear," said the Marquis, turning with a grim smile, to the General, who was standing at his elbow.

"I have nothing further to urge against your proposition," replied D'Elbée, sorrowfully, "for the blazing village yonder has silenced all my objections."

"And mine, too," added Henri, "as the repub-

licans have sown the wind, so let them reap the whirlwind."

"They certainly deserve no compassion at our hands," muttered Alphonse, as if talking to himself; "and if I remember that my friend Destouche is a republican, I cannot but remember also, that my still dearer friend Servette has fallen a victim to the murderous vengeance of republicanism."

Stofflet, who was leaning gloomily on his sword, gazing at the destructive conflagration, no sooner heard the remarks of D'Elbée and Henri, which followed the tumultuous outcries of the peasants, than his eye flashed with a savage exultation, and he hissed out between his clenched teeth: "For every blazing roof in yonder village, at least a hundred republicans shall pay the forfeit of their lives! To your quarters, my men, and rely on it that, in a few hours, you shall be amply revenged on your enemies."

The troops slowly and sullenly retired, and were soon busied in their own affairs, some carefully inspecting their fire-arms to see that they were in a fit state for use; others getting ready the night's supper; and other giving directions to their friends and neighbours, and receiving them in return, as to the steps that should be taken with regard to their families, in case they should happen to fall in the approaching conflict.

The sun had long since set, and the guardian

moon had not yet lit her watch-tower in the clouds, when De Lescure arrived with his reinforcement, and immediately proceeded to report his arrival to the Seigneurs, all of whom—with the solitary exception of Stofflet, who was moving about among the soldiers, endeavouring as much as he could to increase their detestation of the republicans—were assembled at supper in the General's tent. The meeting between De Lescure and Alphonse was affectionate in the extreme, and nothing could exceed their joy, at the prospect of again fighting side by side against the enemy. As for the blunt old Marquis, he was in the highest spirits, and true to his confirmed convivial habits as a Vendean sportsman, he quaffed the coarse wine, at table, with as much relish as if it had been of the choicest vintage, and insisted on the rest of the party following his example.

“ You make but an indifferent host, D'Elbée,” he said, pushing a large stone jug towards him, “ though, certainly, your wine offers no great attractions to a fastidious palate.”

“ I have drank better,” replied the General, in his usual grave, quiet manner.

“ To be sure—to be sure; but old campaigners must not be particular,” exclaimed the Marquis, “ so help yourself, Henri—Alphonse, don't make such wry faces, for the wine is not absolute physic. De Lescure, you, I know, seldom take anything

stronger than water, the more is the pity ; but you must—yes, you really must fill your cup, on this occasion, for it may be the last time some of us will ever touch wine or anything else.”

“True, Marquis,” said De Lescure, “possibly you and I may to-morrow meet Cathelineau’s fate.”

“And that is the very reason why we should make the most of the passing hour,” returned the jovial Seigneur, “It is bad philosophy to be gloomy to-night, because we may get knocked on the head to-morrow—so, fill every one of you, and drink the toast I now propose: ‘Our victory at Torfou !’ for a victory it shall be, though I may not live to witness it.”

There was no resisting this appeal, and the party, therefore, all drained their cups in honour of the Marquis’s toast, and were busily discussing the probable causes of the non-arrival of Bonchamps and Charette, who had been expected for some hours, when Stofflet came into the tent with the tidings that the republicans were close at hand, and that the heads of their leading columns had already entered the wood, which bounded the plain in the direction opposite that of Torfou.

“They will, of course, bivouac there for the night,” said D’Elbée, “for they must be aware of our intention to give them battle.”

“Not a doubt of it,” replied Stofflet “but Kleber,

who is with them, is an experienced soldier, so we must take all due precautions against a night-surprise. I have already dispatched some of my cleverest and most active men to the out-posts, to keep a vigilant eye on their movements ; but as our peasants, even the most quick-witted of them, make but indifferent sentinels, I think we had better, each of us, retire to our respective divisions, and there maintain strict watch and ward till day-break."

This sound advice was immediately acted upon, and the Seigneurs repaired to their different posts, while Alphonse and De Lescure, satisfied that Henri and the elder De Chatillon would keep the requisite look out in the divisions to which the two former as well as the two latter belonged, wandered away, to a small mound of earth, on the edge of the plain in which the Royalists, after their own primitive fashion, were encamped ; and seating themselves on the rough, coarse grass, Alphonse related to his companion all the circumstances of his unexpected meeting with Servette in the prison at Nantes, as well as of the friendly interference of Colonel Destouche in his, the speaker's, behalf.

"Heaven knows," replied De Lescure, "the republicans have need of some men of honour and feeling to redeem their character, and throw a sort of grace on their cause, for the atrocities they have perpetrated in this unfortunate district would disgrace savages."

“And these atrocities will be terribly avenged to-morrow,” said Alphonse; “for we have resolved, in council, neither to give nor take quarter, and my own father, I regret to say, is one of the most determined on this point.”

“I can scarcely wonder at his determination,” exclaimed De Lescure, “much as I may be averse to it.”

“It is impolitic, to say the least of it,” said Alphonse; “however, we must obey orders, and to tell you the truth, I have become much less sensitive on the subject since the wanton murder of my old friend. Humanity to men who can support a cause that sanctions such inhuman deeds, is wholly thrown away. But look, De Lescure, look at the lights moving through the wood yonder! Apparently, the enemy are all on the stir.”

“They are no doubt arranging the night’s bivouac,” was the reply; “for it is not at all likely, jaded as they must be, by their long forced march, that they will think of beating up our quarters till morning.”

“Probably not,” said Alphonse; “nevertheless, it is fortunate that Stofflet has taken precautions against a surprize.”

Just as he ceased speaking, a heavy rumbling as of an approaching train of artillery, together with the more salient tramp of cavalry, was heard in the direction of the wood, accompanied by a loud

uproar of voices, the beat of drums, and occasionally the shrill flourish of a bugle.

The two young Seigneurs turned their eyes, anxiously, towards the quarter whence the sounds proceeded, but they could discern nothing beyond the quick shifting of lights, and the sudden blazing up of watch-fires in those spaces which were most bare of wood.

“The republican columns are still coming up,” observed Alphonse.

“They are cavalry, I think, that have just arrived, escorting a train of field-pieces,” said De Lescure.

“Well, if Bonchamps and Charette do but come up in time, we shall be fully a match for them,” rejoined Alphonse. “My father tells me that our men were never more eager for action; and for my own part, I feel that I have the shame of my late defeat in the suburbs of Nantes to wipe out.”

“And I to bear in mind the last injunctions of the dying Cathelineau,” said De Lescure: “never to give way myself, nor allow my troops to give way to despair.”

“Ah, poor Cathelineau!” exclaimed Alphonse, “his death was a great blow to us; but he died gallantly in the justest cause in which a Frenchman ever drew the sword; and while the faintest spark of patriotism still lingers among us, never will his name be forgotten in the Bocage.”

The friends sate conversing, for some time longer, in that serious, pensive strain, in which De Lescure was so prone to indulge, and which since the departure of Annette and the death of Servette, had become more congenial than ever to Alphonse's feelings, when the former, being fatigued with the day's march, rose to depart, in order to snatch a few hours repose among his men; and Alphonse made his way to a rude sort of tent, which had been hastily put up by his retainers for his own and his father's accommodation.

The moon was now high in heaven, the sky was without a cloud, and myriads of stars hung out their mild lamps, while the atmosphere, though the autumn was far advanced, was dry and bracing without being chilly or inclement. As Alphonse sate alone in his tent—for the Marquis, wishing to set an example of hardy endurance to his men, had thrown himself among them, with nothing but his cloak for a covering, and was now fast asleep, having issued strict orders that he should be roused on the slightest appearance of any suspicious movement on the part of the enemy—as the young chief sate alone in his tent, looking abroad on the calm, clear night, his thoughts wandered back to that evening when he had last conversed with Annette at Machecoul, and he employed himself in weaving conjectures as to where she was at the present moment, and whether he was as often in her recollection, as she was in his.

While thus he sate, absorbed in solitary rumination, his thoughts were suddenly broken in upon by the sound of many voices, proceeding apparently from the near village of Torfou. He listened; the voices were those of women and children as well as men, who were evidently engaged in singing the *Midnight Hymn to the Virgin*. Heard at such an hour, and under such circumstances, the music, always impressive, produced a most soothing effect on the listener's feelings, and his ear drank in the solemn sounds as though they were a chorus of invisible spirits. Louder rose the sacred chant, like the wind gradually deepening in its tones as it sweeps among the chords of an *Æolian harp*; but after a short time the melody grew faint and fainter, and at length died slowly away.

The hour was now fast verging towards midnight; the stir, hitherto so active in the Vendean encampment, had in a great degree ceased; and with the exception of one or two groups of peasants, who still maintained a vigilant watch, the majority of the royalists were buried in profound repose. In the direction of the wood where the republicans were bivouacked, lights might be seen streaming here and there among the trees, and many of the watch-fires were flashing up in a last expiring blaze; but nothing could be heard distinctly, except now and then the neigh of a war-horse, or the monotonous voices of the sentinels at the outposts,

calling out their challenge whenever a footstep approached.

“What a striking contrast,” thought Alphonse, his reflections taking the pensive hue of the hour, “will this scene present, to its present tranquillity, a few hours hence! All then will be wild excitement and savage exultation, where now all is calm undisturbed repose. And when this moon again looks down on earth, on how many ghastly objects will she not glimmer! Well, be it so; I, for one, will not weakly bewail the fate of those who fall in a cause like ours. Better—far better that we should all perish to a man, with our good swords in our hands, than crawl through life, from youth to age, enslaved by the most licentious faction that ever disguised its want of principle under the cloak of patriotism. Ha! who is there?” exclaimed the chief aloud, starting up as he beheld a light figure standing in the wan moonshine, darkening the entrance of the tent.

“It is Victoire,” replied a low, sweet voice.

“Welcome, my young heroine,” said Alphonse, kindly taking the girl’s hand, and drawing her into the tent, “I have not had an opportunity of conversing with you alone, since the day of that unfortunate affair at Nantes, when you fought so bravely by my side. But I have often thought of you, and wondered by what means you escaped being made prisoner.”

“ Luck favoured me,” replied the girl, “ and I was hurried away from the scene of action, by the pressure of our retreating band, in spite of all the efforts I made to rescue you.”

“ You did, indeed, make herculean efforts,” said Alphonse, with a friendly smile, “ and are quite worthy of your heroic prototype, Joan of Arc.”

“ No flattery, Monseigneur, if you please,” exclaimed Victoire, in a mild, but grave spirit of remonstrance; “ as I told you once before, it is distasteful to me at all times, and especially so at the present moment. I sought your presence to-night, with far other views than to listen to my own praises.”

“ Wherefore this solemn air, Victoire?” said Alphonse, “ have you anything on your mind that weighs down your spirits? If so, make me your father-confessor, and trust me I will not betray your confidence. You must lay aside this melancholy, and think only of the glory that awaits us to-morrow. But, perhaps, you are weary of this warfare, and the rude society of the camp? Should such be the case, speak but the word, and I will myself see that you are placed under proper protection in the village of Torfou.”

“ And do you really think so meanly of me, Monseigneur,” replied the girl, with brightened complexion, “ as to suppose that I would desert the cause I have so much at heart, at a crisis like

the present ? Never ! I engaged in it from conviction, and I will resign it only with my life. You tell me to-morrow will be a day of glory for us all: you are right. We shall achieve a decisive victory ; but I shall not survive to witness and exult in its effects ! The sands in my hour-glass are well-nigh run out, and to-morrow closes my earthly career ! You smile, but it is even so ; for my impressions never yet played me false."

"Silly girl !" said Alphonse, encouragingly, "you must not indulge in this gloomy presentiment, which is the mere prompting of an over-excited fancy. Go, and snatch a few hours' sleep, and you will find the tone of your mind wonderfully invigorated by it."

"Sleep will not visit my eyes this night," returned Victoire, "though, a few hours hence, I shall sleep soundly enough ! But do not imagine that it is the conviction of my approaching doom that fills me with sombre thoughts : no, if I feel despondency at all, it is only because I am destined to quit the stage, leaving my mission but half accomplished. I shall pass away from life, Monseigneur, ere the majority of my countrymen know that I have existed. No one will ever hear of the poor, obscure peasant girl, whose every thought was for her native France, and whose sole remaining regret is, that she cannot serve it so effectually as she fondly—perhaps madly—hoped to have done."

“Cheer up, Victoire!” replied Alphonse, “and believe me, you will live many a year yet: live to rejoice in our success and your own well-earned fame—live to be a happy wife and mother, with every Seigneur and peasant in the Bocage for your friend.”

“I would fain hope,” said the girl, shaking her head, “that I might live to see La Vendée once again free and tranquil; but a silent, unerring monitor, within, warns me that my days are numbered. I shall hear no more the thrilling cheers of our brave peasantry as they bound forward on the enemy, or listen with wrapt attention to the solemn, impassioned addresses of our Curés, that first kindled my enthusiasm! The gallant mustering of squadrons, the proud throng of chiefs, the flourish of the trumpets that used to make my heart leap within me, the uplifting of the sacred banner, the charge, the rally, the pursuit, and, oh! more than all, the final shout of victory!—never more shall these inspiring sights and sounds of war stir a single feeling in my unawakening soul! But it is not this, that I came to speak to you about, Monseigneur. I must meet my inevitable doom as best I may, and, perhaps, I ought not to have dwelt so long, on a theme of importance only to myself; but I have a father—I have a mother: an old, industrious couple, who, bereft of their child, will need all the kindness and forbearance

that can be shown them ; and it is in their favour that I would now seek to interest you. Be a friend to them when I am gone !—perhaps I have not been all to them that I should have been, and at this solemn hour I would fain make them every reparation in my power. Will you promise me this, Monseigneur ?”

“ I will,” said Alphonse, deeply affected by the girl’s manner. “ I will be their friend and protector through life ; and should aught befall me, I will take care that their wants shall be duly attended to by the members of my father’s household.”

“ A thousand thanks for your generosity,” replied Victoire ; “ you have removed a load from my mind, and I shall now meet my fate with composure.”

“ Once again, Victoire, I entreat you to dismiss these gloomy thoughts,” exclaimed Alphonse ; “ remember, your chance of escape in the approaching conflict is quite as good as mine ; and who knows but I may be the victim, and you the survivor ? But I do not allow these considerations to depress my spirits, nor should you, but, on the contrary, encourage as cheerful a frame of mind as possible.”

“ Believe me, Monseigneur,” returned the girl, “ my mind is not depressed : no, it is rather solemnized and exalted by the contemplation of my coming doom. But I will not intrude longer

on your time. My errand here is accomplished, and now I will take my final leave. Farewell, my protector, my friend—if so I may presume to call you—you have been considerate and forbearing, to a degree that I had no right to expect; when others would have exposed me, or at least have treated my pretensions with scorn, you have preserved my woman's secret, and for this I owe you my eternal gratitude. Farewell! Do not forget the humble peasant girl, but when this war is brought to a triumphant issue, and the sounds of rejoicing are once again heard in the Bocage, pay the tribute of a passing thought to her memory.”

As Victoire said these words, she knelt, and reverently kissed the hand which Alphonse held out towards her. A tear fell on it; but before the young chief could make any reply to her farewell, she had risen to her feet, and hurried out of the tent.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEXT morning, as soon as it was light, both armies were on the stir. The Seigneurs and the other royalist officers were everywhere moving among their troops, infusing their own indomitable courage and confidence into them ; and, every instant, numerous bodies of peasantry came briskly moving forward to the scene of action from the adjacent village of Torfou. The best possible spirit pervaded the entire army, and the opportune arrival of Charette, who had come up about an hour before with a large auxiliary force, added greatly to their sanguine expectations of a victory.

The republicans, on their part, were not less active, or less confident of a triumphant issue to the day's struggle. From the very first faint break of morning, the roll of drums and the enlivening bray of trumpets were heard summoning the men

to action ; and every now and then loud, exulting shouts arose of “*Vive la République !*” “*A bas les aristocrates !*” as regiment after regiment emerged from the wood, and formed upon the open plain. Westermann and Kleber, the latter of whom was one of the most skilful generals of the day, were in the saddle, among the earliest of the officers, arranging their plan of action, and issuing minute orders to the members of their staff ; for painful experience had at length satisfied them that the Vendéans, mere peasants though they were, were not to be despised, and that it would task their utmost address and determination to gain a decided advantage over them.

When the royalists were drawn up in order of battle, General d’Elbée, accompanied by several Curés, whose eloquence was well-known, and who usually acted as his military chaplains, addressed them in solemn, emphatic terms, on the subject of the pending conflict ; immediately after which, mass was celebrated in front of the army, all of whom paid the most devout attention to the sacred rite, which was rendered still more impressive from the circumstances under which it was performed.

When the ceremony was concluded, De Laroche-jaquelein, who had quitted his division, in order to converse with some of his brother chiefs, not seeing Alphonse among them, inquired eagerly of his father where he was.

“Where!” exclaimed the Marquis, looking about him, “why, where he should be—in the field, of course! or perhaps, he has gone to reconnoitre the lines of the enemy, though that is somewhat difficult, in this heavy mist.”

“So difficult,” replied Henri, “that I scarcely think he would venture on such an experiment.”

“The mist will soon disperse,” observed Stofflet, “and be succeeded by a glorious sunshine. It is merely an autumnal vapour, and see, even now, it is beginning to sail away before the rising wind.”

As he spoke, a gleam of sunlight came streaming through the fog, which parted in several places, and showed the deep blue of the sky beyond.

Henri, meanwhile, when he found that Alphonse was not with his division, immediately darted off to the Marquis’s tent, which was one of the few that had not yet been removed, and there he saw his friend, buried in profound sleep, the result of extreme fatigue, both of mind and body.

“Up, up, Alphonse!” exclaimed Henri, shaking him roughly by the shoulder. “Our army is already in the field, and the republicans have formed their line of battle. I little thought to find you, of all men, slumbering at such an hour!”

“I take shame to myself for my indolence,” said Alphonse, starting to his legs, and grasping his sword, which lay ready by his side; “but I have

been up the greatest part of the night, and sleep unconsciously stole over me, while I sate alone in the tent, awaiting the break of day. Where is my father? I have not seen him since we separated last night, after supper."

"Oh, he is with the other chiefs," replied De Larochejaquelein, "so come along, quick; every moment is of value now. Hark! the bugles of the enemy are sounding the charge!"

The two young Seigneurs posted off to the place where Henri had left his colleagues, and came up with them as they were in the act of taking their positions at the head of their respective divisions. One hearty squeeze of the hand, and they parted; Henri to join De Lescure, who commanded the cavalry, and Alphonse to assume his fitting station beside his father.

At this critical juncture the sun, which had been momentarily increasing in power, broke through the fading, half-dispelled vapours which were soon wholly scattered by the wind, and brought into full view the position of the two armies, at the instant they were closing on each other.

The battle commenced by a desperate charge of the troops of Mayence, who, headed by Kleber, came thundering on like an avalanche. Charette's division, which was drawn up directly opposite them, met the onslaught with singular steadiness, considering how unused the peasantry were to this

sort of warfare, and a terrible slaughter ensued, both parties disputing every inch of ground with the most unyielding determination of purpose. Twice the royalists were beaten back, owing to some skilful manœuvres executed by Kleber; but Charette, throwing himself into the midst of his men, contrived to rally them in time to prevent their flight.

While the issue of the battle in this quarter continued doubtful, the cavalry, under the command of De Lescure made a successful attack on Westermann's division; but pushing their advantage too far, the foremost squadron with the young chief at their head, who were greatly in advance of their comrades, would infallibly have been cut off from them, if Stofflet, seeing at a glance their hazardous predicament, had not made a diversion in their favour, and succeeded in extricating them, though with a dreadful loss of life.

As the republicans had somewhat the advantage in point of numbers, and were, besides, better disciplined than the royalists, they gradually gained upon the latter; and nothing but the inflexible perseverance of the peasantry, who were infuriated by the recollection of their burning villages, prevented a total overthrow. Not a man among them but fought with the very frenzy of desperation. Stofflet's detachment, in particular, panting to revenge the death of Cathelineau, and stimulated by the example

of their fiery commander, who threw himself into every quarter where the danger was greatest, as though he bore a charmed life, performed prodigies of valour ; and supported by a small body of cavalry, which De Lescure had detached from his division at Stofflet's urgent entreaties, fell with all their force on the troops of Mayence, and, despite the efforts of Kleber, exterminated them almost to a man.

Still, notwithstanding this success, the fortunes of the day were going against the royalists, who were terribly weakened by the immense losses they had sustained from the fire of the well-served republican artillery, which mowed them down in platoons. Seeing the emergency of the case, Charette directed a body of his best riflemen to steal round, under the partial cover of a small copse, towards the wood, and attack the enemy in the rear, in the hope that they might imagine that a fresh army was advancing upon them in that direction. Having seen his orders punctually attended to, he sent off his aides-de-camp to the Marquis, D'Elbée, and the other chiefs, acquainting them with his manœuvre, and recommending that they should advance in a body, and put all to the hazard of a general charge. His recommendation was cordially approved of by the Seigneurs, who, the instant they heard the fire, accompanied by the loud cheers of the riflemen, and saw by the wavering of the enemy, that Charette's *ruse* had succeeded, rushed forward

in one overwhelming mass, and such was the headlong fury of their charge, that for some minutes they bore down all before them.

But Kleber was not the soldier to give way without a desperate struggle. Dispatching Westermann to keep a wary eye on the wood, and dislodge the lurking riflemen, he brought up all his reserves, and hurled them full upon the royalists. Again were the latter driven back; and the Marquis's shattered division, becoming suddenly panic-stricken, took to precipitate flight, bearing their leaders back with them in their retreat.

The battle had now raged for some hours, and the noon was already past, when Victoire who had fought during the day with the utmost bravery by Alphonse's side, vexed and humiliated by the disgraceful flight of the troops which the two De Chatillons commanded, adopted, on the spur of the moment, a resolution worthy of her lofty and romantic character.

Hastening, alone, towards a hillock which was situated between the scene of action and the village of Torfou, she mounted to the summit at the moment when the fugitives were flying past it; and bringing all eyes upon her by her impassioned tones and gestures, she tore off the hat beneath which she had hitherto concealed her luxuriant tresses and letting them flow down her shoulders so that her sex might at once be recognized, she waved

her sword above her head, and exclaimed, at the utmost stretch of her voice: “Vendeans, will you allow yourselves to be surpassed in courage by a mere girl? Turn back, I implore you! I have fought with you throughout the day, and will perish, rather than join you in your inglorious flight. Turn back, I say! One more charge, and the victory is ours!”

Alphonse, who was struggling to extricate himself and his father from the disorderly mass, that were still bearing them back from the field, was the first to catch sight of this unexpected apparition; and forcing himself with difficulty out of the rushing throng, he shouted aloud, at the same time pointing towards Victoire, who was yet standing alone on the hill, drawn up to her full height, and looking like some inspired sybil.

“ Soldiers, once the conquerors of Bressuire, of Thouars, of Saumur, but now a mere cowardly mob of fugitives, look yonder—there stands a girl who shames you all! As you are men, as you are Christians, as you are royalists, do not leave her to perish by the swords of the enemy!”

This appeal was irresistible. The Vendeans struck with sudden humiliation at their dishonourable panic, and filled with wonder and admiration of the brave heroine standing alone and unprotected on the hill, instantly rallied; and Alphonse and his father putting themselves at their head, followed by

Victoire, now become an object of universal interest, they made a last desperate stand against the republicans, who had imagined that the confusion in their ranks was irreparable, and were themselves disordered by the very ardour of their pursuit.

Again the battle raged with terrible ferocity, neither party giving nor accepting quarter; when suddenly cheering cries of "Vive le Roi!" were heard in the direction of Torfou, and presently up came a squadron of cavalry headed by Bonchamps. The arrival of this fresh reinforcement just in the nick of time, at once decided the fortune of the day; for the republicans, fancying that another army was advancing upon them, threw down their arms and fled in all directions, despite the impassioned remonstrances and menaces of the half-distracted Kleber; and were pursued for some distance by the royalists who cut them down without mercy. In a short time, not a single republican remained on the field of action, for all who were overtaken in their flight were instantly put to death; and the entire baggage and artillery of the enemy fell into the hands of the triumphant Vendean!

Thus ended the battle of Torfou, by far the most glorious and decisive in which the royalists had yet engaged. Their descendants still talk of it with exultation; and in honour of it, a granite column has, within the last twenty years, been erected near

the village, close by the spot where the final stand was made by the conquerors, bearing on its four sides, the celebrated names of “Bonchamps,” “Charette,” “D’Elbée,” “De Lescure.”

The day was now far advanced, the energy of the pursuit had relaxed, and the Vendees slowly returned to the battle-field. Exhausted, but with unimpaired spirits, they thronged round the spot where the exulting Seigneurs were assembled, and cheered them all, in succession—especially their Commander-in-chief, D’Elbée, or “General Providence,” as he was familiarly called by the soldiers. When it came to Alphonse’s turn, “No, no,” he exclaimed, in answer to the stunning peals of acclamation with which his name was received: “it is not I who merit your applause but that heroic girl, Victoire; she it was who most contributed to gain the victory, so go, some of you, and bring her hither, that publicly, in the face of the whole army, we may pay her the homage due to her valour.”

“Ay, we must not forget her,” said the Marquis. “I marked her with astonishment and admiration, as she stood alone on the hill, with the enemy close upon her; if it had not been for her quickness of conception, the day would have gone against us, notwithstanding the arrival of Bonchamps. And to think that a mere girl should have played this gallant part! Well, henceforth I

shall entertain a better opinion of the sex than I have ever yet done."

"She is the noblest spirit in La Vendée," exclaimed the warm-hearted Henri, "and would dignify the proudest station. I declare, I could almost find it in my heart to offer myself to her as a husband."

"Make no rash vows, boy," said the Marquis, gravely. "Honour should be your bride."

"And is there not honour in wedded life?" asked De Lescure.

A momentary cloud stole over the Marquis de Chatillon's countenance, and he made no reply, but turned away to speak to Stofflet, who was wiping his bloody sword, and conversing with D'Elbée, Charette and Bonchamps, on the events of the day.

"We have gained a glorious triumph, and such as will never be forgotten in the Bocage," said the Marquis.

"We have indeed," replied Stofflet, exultingly; "and my sword has drunk deep of republican blood. Do you see this notch? It was made by Westermann's helmet, whom I unhorsed, and should have sent direct to the devil, if he had not been rescued by a party of his cut-throats. As it is, I have given him good cause to remember the humble gamekeeper."

"Our cavalry did wonders," said Charette,

“considering how little experience they have had, compared with the enemy.”

“And our infantry, too, notwithstanding the sudden panic of my men,” observed the Marquis; “but here comes our heroine! Well, she richly deserves the enthusiastic acclamations with which the soldiers greet her.”

Victoire here came up, leaning heavily on the arms of two Vendean officers, and accompanied by a crowd of peasants who were cheering her at every step of her advance. All the chiefs immediately moved forward a few paces, and stood in a sort of semi-circle, each vieing with the other in his eagerness to pay respect to her heroism.

As the young girl stood before them, exhausted, trembling in every limb, and with her countenance flushed with the various emotions of pride, gratitude and enthusiasm, her demeanour excited profoundest interest in all who beheld her.

“Victoire,” said General d’Elbée, stepping out from the circle of his colleagues, while a deep stillness pervaded the whole assembly: “Victoire, your conduct this day, so rare in one of your sex, will never to their latest hour be forgotten by those who witnessed it. You have conferred on the soldiers of the monarchy, the greatest obligations, for it is chiefly owing to you that our present victory has been achieved. Accept, then, my heartfelt thanks — the thanks of my brother

officers—the thanks of every individual in the army. Shout, men, shout! let the welkin ring again with your cheers for the brave Victoire!—Honour to Victoire, the heroine of Torfou!"

As the General ceased, he pressed the girl's hand fervently within his own; and all the Seigneurs, successively, came forward and paid her the compliments due to her signal bravery, while at the same moment, deafening cries of "Vive Victoire!" arose from the whole army; and the blunt, but kindly-natured Marquis, on whom the heroine's unassuming demeanour had made the most favourable impression, unbuckled his sword, and presenting it to her, said: "This is a strange gift to make to one of your sex, my good girl; but you have shown that you know how to wield it in your country's cause, and perhaps you will accept it from me, as a token of my sincere friendship, and as a proof that I deem you worthy of all the honour that the army of the monarchy can confer on you. In giving it to you, I feel that I am giving it to one, who will never dream of drawing it, but in such a sacred cause as that in which we are now embarked. Victoire, from this moment, I and my brother chiefs are your friends for life."

When the Marquis finished speaking, Alphonse approached and gently whispered in the girl's ear: "You see now, Victoire, that your presentiment was erroneous; you have lived to emerge from

obscurity, and to win the approbation of a whole army."

Victoire made no answer; her feelings were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm with which she had been received by her countrymen; her limbs trembled; the colour came and went from her cheeks; and turning her eyes with an expression of deep emotion on Alphonse, she faltered forth: "Do not, Monseigneur, forget your promise to my poor father and mother," and then sank insensible on the ground.

A dozen individuals instantly darted forward to raise her; but, alas! their efforts to revive her were of no avail. The excitement of her spirits had set a severe wound bleeding afresh, that she had received during the action, and had contrived for awhile to stanch; and the heroine of Torfou was no more!

The shock occasioned by this unexpected catastrophe, was profoundly felt by all who beheld it. Many a rough, blood-stained visage was bedewed with tears; even Stofflet sighed as he gazed on the lifeless body; and the Marquis de Chatillon, was obliged to leave the spot, in order to conceal the emotion which he deemed derogatory to his manhood.

For some minutes, not a single voice was heard. A hushed stillness, like that of the grave, pervaded the entire multitude. At length

Alphonse, whose agitation nearly deprived him of utterance, pointing towards the corpse, gasped out : “ She is gone—past away like a dream—the young, the beautiful, the noblest-minded girl that ever drew breath in the Bocage ! Lift her up, soldiers, and bear her silently and reverently to Torfou, where a solemn mass shall be offered up in her behalf to Heaven, and every honour that her grateful countrymen can bestow, shall be paid to her ashes. Farewell, Victoire, too late known, too early lost ! I never met your equal before ; I shall never meet your equal again ;” and for the moment even the recollection of Annette was effaced by that of the heroine of Torfou !

CHAPTER XIV.

THE news of the defeat of Westermann and Kleber at Torfou, no sooner reached Paris, than it excited the greatest dismay and astonishment. Had the united forces of Austria and Prussia been within a day's march of them, the citizens could not have shown greater consternation. The sagacious Danton, taking advantage of the general alarm, and fully alive to the exigency of the case, immediately repaired with his colleagues to the National Convention, and procured, without difficulty, a decree for the instant levying of two hundred thousand men, a large portion of whom were collected in the provinces contiguous to La Vendée, and sent off in breathless haste to that disturbed district, with strict injunctions to spare neither man, woman, nor child, but to turn the whole country into a barren, lifeless desert. This

enormous army soon reached its destination, and commenced operations by surrounding the devoted provinces in all directions, so as scarcely to leave the peasantry a possibility of escape.

Several days had now elapsed since the defeat of the republicans at Torfou, but, contrary to their usual custom, the peasants had not returned home to their families—for, alas ! many of them had no home to return to !—but continued in arms under their respective chiefs, who had, by this time, all dispersed in different directions. Charette and Stofflet had gone, with a large division, to watch the Marais, which was threatened by the enemy at Nantes ; De Larochjaquelein and his cousin to reinforce the garrison of Saumur ; and Bonchamps and D'Elbée to protect Chollet, which they had recaptured from the republicans, and which they proposed, for the present, to make their head-quarters, whence they might keep up a communication with the other Seigneurs. As for the Marquis and his son, they marched with their division to Chatillon, into which town Westermann had thrown himself, immediately after his retreat from Torfou, and which he now occupied with a small detachment of troops.

After a fierce and protracted struggle, the Marquis succeeded in gaining possession of Chatillon, from which Westermann was compelled to make a precipitate retreat, and was hotly pursued

for some miles by the triumphant Vendéans who, infuriated by the desperate resistance that had been made, massacred without mercy all the republicans who fell into their hands.

It was late in the evening, and Alphonse and his father, after vainly endeavouring to restore order among their men—whom the horrors of the assault, aided by a copious store of wine and brandy, which they had found in the republican General's quarters, had transformed for the time into so many drunken savages—were seated together in the house of one of the town authorities, when an aide-de-camp of the Marquis entered with intelligence that a peasant, from the village of Lavallière, wished to speak with him.

“ Bid him enter,” said the Seigneur. “ Doubtless he comes with news from the château. God grant that all be safe there; and that the republicans have not revenged themselves for their defeat at Torfou on my unoffending household.”

The man came in; his brow was clouded—his manner indicative of grief and anxiety. Alphonse cast a scrutinizing glance at him; and in that one glance read the nature of his communication.

“ So you come from Lavallière,” exclaimed the Marquis; “ well, and what news do you bring from the château?”

The messenger looked wistfully at Alphonse,

and hesitated, as if fearing to trust himself with an answer.

“ Speak out,” resumed the Seigneur ; “ but I can guess the purport of your visit. The republicans have surprized the château ; is it not so ?”

“ It is too true,” replied the messenger. “ A detachment set out from Nantes, immediately after the news of the late defeat had been received there ; and—and—”

“ Speak out, fellow, I insist, without reserve or hesitation,” exclaimed the impatient chief. “ The enemy attacked and took possession of the chateau—”

“ They did so, Monseigneur ; but this is not the worst, they not only attacked it, but they set fire to it, and burned it to the ground ; and though the majority of the household contrived to make their escape, yet old Pierre and his niece were murdered in cold blood.”

A terrible expression passed over the Marquis’s countenance, as he listened to these sickening details. He seemed absolutely convulsed with the intensity of his emotions, and deprived of all power of speech ; and after staring wildly for some seconds, at the messenger, like one planet-struck, he suddenly started up, rushed from the room, and shut himself up in another part of the house, whence he did not emerge the whole night, refusing even to admit his son, who made more

than one attempt to cheer him by his presence ; but finding that all his solicitations to be allowed to enter were fruitless, he walked out into the streets, his mind filled with bitterer and more vindictive feelings than he had known since the commencement of the war.

The sight, that everywhere met his gaze, did not tend much to calm the stormy state of his feelings. The public thoroughfares were thronged with bodies of peasantry, screaming out their national airs, and cursing the republicans in all the excitement of intoxication, their hands and faces still dyed with the blood they had shed in the struggle ; and others—by no means few in number—were stretched full-length in the street, unable to move a limb, from the intensity of their potations. Many of the best shops in the town had been ransacked of their contents, which the victors had wantonly flung into the causeway ; and in the market-place, a large party of women and children were huddled together, like frightened deer ; some were reclining on the bare ground, faint with wounds they had received from the enraged royalists, and others were wringing their hands, and uttering the most dreadful cries, as if they momentarily expected to be massacred.

As Alphonse approached these helpless victims of the thousand baleful passions which civil war lets loose, he caught sight of a party of his officers,

who, pursuant to the orders of the Marquis, had been endeavouring to muster a sufficient guard for the protection of the town, in case the enemy should attempt to recapture it ; and stopping them, he inquired what success they had met with.

“ A few of the men,” said the senior officer, “ are slowly beginning to return to a sense of duty, but the majority are still in the most undisciplined state. The vast store of wine, spirits, and all sorts of provisions, which they found in Westermann’s quarters, have reduced them to a condition in which I never saw them before, and most devoutly hope I may never see them again. A few more such scenes, Monseigneur, and our cause is irreparably lost.”

“ You say true,” exclaimed Alphonse, sadly, “ the demoralization of our hitherto orderly peasantry, is far more to be dreaded than the swords of the enemy. And how many men have you succeeded in mustering for duty ?”

“ Barely three hundred,” was the reply. “ As for the rest, they are scattered all over the town, nearly, if not quite, incapable of any sort of action.”

“ Horrible !” rejoined Alphonse. “ Well, take a dozen or more of such men as you can most rely on, and let them conduct these poor defenceless women and children to the church, which is their safest place of refuge, for the night, and there keep strict guard over them ; and in the morning, when

the soldiers have had time to cool, they will doubtless return to their old habits of subordination, and we need fear nothing more for the safety of the prisoners."

Having given these orders, Alphonse bowed to the officers, and resumed his solitary walk, musing by the way, on the sad change that this frightful warfare had produced on the minds of the royalists, and more particularly on the stunning shock which his father had just received. "Gracious God!" he exclaimed, unconscious that he was giving utterance to his thoughts, "is there never to be an end of these atrocities? Pierre and his niece—the sprightly, affectionate Victorine—both murdered in cold blood!" The tears dropped fast from his eyes as he recalled their images to his mind; and he wandered on with his head drooping on his chest, ignorant whither he was going, till he found himself close to the gates of the town.

To his infinite astonishment, he perceived that the gates were not even closed, and that there was not so much as a single sentinel or guard on duty. Enraged at such negligence, on the part of those officers to whom the task of appointing the watch had been intrusted, he quickly retraced his steps, with the intention of putting them under arrest. But when he reached their quarters, he found that they were all absent; and not knowing in the general confusion and licence of the time, where to

look for them, he decided on waiting in the house till one or more should return. Upwards of an hour, however, elapsed, during which darkness had come on, and not an officer making his appearance, the young Seigneur, feeling that every minute's delay was now of vital consequence, was about to issue forth in search of the delinquents—and in the event of not finding them, to dispatch the first steady soldiers he should encounter, to mount guard at the gates—when a loud uproar was heard at the entrance of the town, succeeded by the thundering tramp of cavalry; and presently several bodies of peasantry, shocked into sudden sobriety by fright, came rushing towards him with cries of: "We are surprized! The republicans are on us!"

It was but too true. The crafty Westermann, after continuing his retreat for some distance, finding that he was no longer pursued, had come to a halt, and determined on concealing himself and his party in a thick wood, that lay near their road, and returning to surprize Chatillon at night-fall, calculating, and not unjustly, on the confusion that would exist among the royalists. On arriving at the gates of the town, and meeting with not the slightest opposition, he had instantly dashed forward at the head of his hussars, sabreing without mercy, all who came in his way.

On being made acquainted with the cause of

the tumult, Alphonse gave directions that the tocsin should be instantly rung ; and putting himself at the head of a small body of peasants, who were still capable of action, he boldly confronted the advancing enemy. Most providentially, the night was become so dark, that the republicans were unable to ascertain the nature and amount of the force opposed to them, and struck out in a great degree at random, killing several of their own men as well as royalists. The confusion in the streets, meanwhile, was horrible ; and scores of drunken peasants were trampled to death beneath the horses' hoofs, while the shrieks of terrified females were heard in all quarters. To increase the general horror of the scene, a few of the more desperate hussars, taking advantage of the darkness of the season, had dismounted from their chargers, rushed into many of the houses, whose tenants they put to the sword, and then set them on fire, so that conflagration was added to slaughter.

This scene of bloodshed and confusion continued for full an hour, at the expiration of which, Westermann sounded the bugle of recall, and just at the right moment, for by this time a body of mounted royalists had been got together, by the indefatigable exertions of some of the officers, who, assisted by several of the townsmen rendered desperate by the accumulated disasters of the day, would infallibly have exterminated the republicans,

inasmuch as they had now considerably the advantage of them in point of numbers.

Grieved, humiliated, and depressed, by the events of the last few hours, Alphonse having at length succeeded in posting sentinels at the gates of the town, and inducing a small body of peasants to remain on the watch during the remainder of the night, returned to his quarters, where, after ruminating sadly for some time on the tragical end of poor Pierre and his niece, he gradually dropped off into a deep, dreamless slumber.

When he met his father next morning at the breakfast-table, he was struck with the change which a few hours had wrought in his countenance and manner. He made not the slightest allusion to the catastrophe that had taken place at his château; and even when informed of the events of the night, and Westermann's surprize of the town, he evinced no symptom of excitement; his demeanour was that of perfect calmness; but it was a stern—a terrible calmness, which showed how deep was the feeling of revenge, against the republicans, that had entered into his soul. From this moment to the hour of his death, his character was wholly changed; there was no more *bon-hommie* or blunt cordiality of manner about him; he was distinguished only by his inexorableness of purpose, and became—without even excepting Stofflet—the most relentless of the Vendean chiefs.

CHAPTER XV.

THE capture of Chatillon was almost the last gleam of success that shone on the fortunes of the royalists. Dark days were at hand, and the sun which had risen so brightly was about to set amid cloud and storm. The immense masses of republican troops which kept pouring incessantly into the devoted district swept all before them ; and such was the terror which their cruelty inspired, that the peasantry began to sink into a state of abject torpor, notwithstanding the strenuous endeavours of the Seigneurs to rekindle their old enthusiasm. Night and day fires were to be seen blazing in a dozen different directions ; wild, ferocious dogs who feasted on the bodies of the slain, were frequently the only living things to be met with in villages for miles and miles together ; and hundreds of destitute labourers, driven from

their once peaceful homes, were compelled to betake themselves to the woods, and there live, like savages, in caves or huts fashioned out of the branches of trees.

Charette, overwhelmed by the innumerable hordes that advanced against him from Nantes, lost town after town in the Marais ; and as he commanded the most numerous division of the Vendean army, the tidings of his reverses deepened the dejection of the peasantry and soon began to affect even their Seigneurs. Under these circumstances, Bonchamps—after sustaining a signal defeat at Chollet, where General D'Elbée was mortally wounded—having contrived to effect a junction with De Lescure, his cousin Henri, and the De Chatillons, proposed in council, that their united divisions should cross the Loire and carry on the war on the right bank.

This proposal, as coming from a commander whose judgment was held in deserved respect, was received with approbation by the soldiers, who anticipated much from the general kindness, hospitality, and known loyalty of the Bretons ; but the Marquis de Chatillon and De Larochejaquelein heard it with undisguised indignation.

“ Cross the Loire !” exclaimed the former, “ and abandon the Bocage to its fate? Never will I give my consent to such a humiliating proposition ! Even could we be sure of a general rising among

the Bretons, still the project would be an unworthy one, for what is it, but a direct confession of our want of faith in our own energies ! Most earnestly do I protest against it."

" And so do I," said Henri, " it will be time enough to think of transferring the war to the right bank of the river when a single royalist squadron only is left in La Vendée. For my own part, sooner than consent to such a scheme, I will die here, sword in hand, as becomes the race from which I spring."

" But you forget," observed Bonchamps, raising himself with difficulty from the truckle-bed on which he lay—for he had received a desperate wound at Chollet, which soon afterwards proved fatal—" you forget that our soldiers are no longer what they were at Thouars and Fontenay. Their recent reverses have damped their courage, and what is worse, discipline is fast becoming relaxed among them."

" There is but too much truth in Bonchamps' remark," said De Lescure, " I myself have witnessed, of late, proofs of the increasing demoralization of our peasantry, who now seem bent on trying their fortune on the other side of the Loire. If, then, we oppose them, we shall but lose our legitimate influence over them ; far better, therefore, that we make a virtue of necessity, and turn the movement to a profitable account. I was as un-

willing as you can be, Henri, to cross the river when the scheme was first started, but since I have become acquainted with the fixed sentiments of our men, I feel there is no alternative left."

"I at least," said the Marquis, doggedly, "have the alternative of leaving my ashes in the Bocage. There I was born, there for upwards of thirty years I have exercised the rights of Seigneur, and there I will die."

"And is this your determination, also?" inquired De Lescure of Alphonse.

"Of course it is," said Henri, emphatically, "he will continue with his father to the last hour of his life. I wonder you can ask such a question!"

"Nevertheless, if I am not much mistaken, Alphonse takes the same view of the case as I do," replied De Lescure.

"Is this really so?" asked the Marquis, looking gravely, almost sternly, at his son.

"What De Lescure says about the increasing demoralization of our troops is but too true," observed Alphonse, "as you, my father, lately witnessed at Chatillon."

"But discipline may be restored by a little promptitude and vigour on our parts," suggested Henri.

"Ay, and discipline shall be restored," exclaimed the Marquis, passionately, "even if it be at the cost of hundreds of lives. I can make all

due allowances for the licence prevailing among troops, situated as ours are at this crisis; but I cannot—and I will not—tolerate a deliberate disobedience of orders, no matter whether it be manifested by an individual or a regiment."

"But you have not yet given us your opinion respecting this project of crossing the Loire," said Henri, casting a significant glance at Alphonse.

"Well, then, since you force me to speak," replied Alphonse, "I must say that I coincide in opinion with Bonchamps and De Lescure. Hemmed in, as we are, by the republicans, whose armies are daily drawing closer round us, it is impossible that we can make head against them with the slightest prospect of success. We may indeed contrive to carry on a sort of guerilla warfare for some three or four months longer; but the most sanguine among us can hope for no more decisive victories over troops trained, disciplined, furnished with an excellent commissariat, and outnumbering us by at least ten to one. If we protract our stay in La Vendée our doom is settled; but if we place the Loire between us and our enemies, we shall have the feelings of our soldiers with us, and may, besides, expect to be reinforced and supplied with all that is necessary by the loyal and hospitable Bretons. In a word, the case stands thus. On the right bank of the river a chance is still left us; here, on the left, the utmost we can look forward

to is, to die like men, but to know that we die in vain."

This reasoning, calmly but earnestly put forth, was not without its effect even on the Marquis, who, though not wholly convinced, was yet considerably shaken by it. Henri, however, whose sole guides were his own fiery impulses, remained steadfast in his opposition. "It is an unworthy, a ruinous project, this of crossing the Loire," he exclaimed. "What! is bravery extinct in the Bocage that we must have recourse to the coward's expedient of retreat? Are there not still thousands—ay, and tens of thousands of peasants ready to enlist under our banner? Is not Charette, though worsted for a time, still at the head of a numerous division in the Marais? Once more, I say, let us rouse the entire province—let us summon all to arms who have strength enough to wield a musket—and when this has failed, but not till then, let us cross over with the remnant of our disheartened troops into Britanny."

"Marquis de Chatillon, and you, De Laroche-jaquelein, hear 'me for one moment,'" exclaimed Bonchamps, anxious to prevent further differences among the chiefs, "while I propose a medium plan, which I hope will gain the suffrages of all of us, and which I am sure you will not think less favourably of, when I state that it was seriously entertained by D'Elbée, who discussed it more than

once with me, and would have carried it into execution had he lived."

All listened attentively, while Bonchamps proceeded as follows, in a feeble tone of voice, which was not heard without difficulty: "You are aware, of course, of the deep interest which the foreign powers—especially England—take in the present distracted state of affairs in France, and how anxious they are to see the revolutionary spirit put down. Now, I propose that the project of crossing the Loire, since it is only to breed disputes between us, should be postponed for the present."

"An excellent idea!" exclaimed Henri, with animation.

"Do not interrupt me," continued Bonchamps, "I propose, I say, before we finally resort to this expedient, that we should dispatch an agent, armed with proper credentials, to London, there to confer with the English Government, and ascertain how they are disposed towards us. If we can but prevail on them to grant us a supply of men and money—which, with Mr. Pitt's anti-Jacobin views, is not unlikely—a landing may easily be effected in the Marais—say, at Paimbœuf, the mouth of the Loire, or at St. Gilles. You know, of course, that Charette, some months since, sent off M. de Godelliére to England with a similar object; but though he arrived safe there, he lost his papers on the journey, so could not be accredited. Our

agent will, I hope, have better luck ; and should he succeed in his diplomatic mission, we will join our English auxiliaries, with an army of at least fifty thousand men ; a fresh impetus will be given to our cause ; the emigrants, encouraged by the open support of the British Cabinet, will flock to us by hundreds from Coblenz and elsewhere ; and why may we not look forward to the honour of being commanded in person by a prince of the blood ?”

“ I like your proposal,” said the Marquis ; “ first, because it occupied the last thoughts of our lamented D’Elbée ; and secondly—and this with me is its chief recommendation—because it postpones for some time longer the humiliating passage of the Loire.”

“ And the last is my reason for acceding to it,” exclaimed Henri. “ But where are we to find an envoy fitted by his rank, his intelligence, and his resolution, to undertake so difficult a negotiation ? I, for one, even were I qualified for the task, will not volunteer my services, for no power on earth shall induce me to quit the field of action at such a crisis as the present.”

“ Nor I,” replied the elder De Chatillon ; “ my proper place is here with the army ; elsewhere, I am a fish out of water, and should only mar the cause I wished to serve.”

“ I myself would gladly undertake the mission,” said Bonchamps, “ but I much fear that I shall

never again be fit for any sort of active duty," and he cast a desponding look at his bandaged legs.

"Alphonse—De Lescure—what say you to trying your skill at diplomacy?" exclaimed Henri, turning first to one, and then to another of his colleagues.

The parties appealed to looked at each other, but made no answer; for though neither would have hesitated to accept the mission, yet after what Henri had said about his determination not to quit the field of action at such a perilous season, they were apprehensive that a wrong interpretation might be put upon their acceptance, and that it might appear as if they were anxious to absent themselves while the army was in danger; so they maintained silence from a chivalrous sense of honour.

Nor were they mistaken in their notion, for the Marquis, struck with their marked reserve, and judging of others' feelings by his own said, in his most considerate manner :

"I do not wonder, lads, at your reluctance to quit us in this extremity, even though it be to undertake a task of moment. Your reluctance is creditable to your feelings; but you should bear in mind, that when our cause demands a personal sacrifice, it is our duty to make it without a murmur. Alphonse, you are well acquainted with

the English language; you saw a good deal of English character—I remember your telling me at the time—when you used to be staying with your friends, the Delilles, at Nantes; and none, therefore, can be better qualified for such a mission than yourself. Will you, then, undertake it? But I need not ask the question, for I am sure that no son of mine will ever shrink from his duty, no matter how irksome it may be to his feelings."

Alphonse was about to declare his perfect readiness to comply with his father's wish—for the thought of again meeting Annette came over him—when Bonchamps, judging by the flush in his countenance which this exciting thought called up, that the mission was anything but agreeable to him, said, in a kindly tone of voice:

"Not so fast, Marquis; there is no reason why your son should be selected for this duty more than De Lescure, who, I make no doubt, will be equally willing to undertake it."

"I am at the bidding of the council," replied De Lescure, "and will readily do whatever they command."

"Well said, boy; that's just what I was prepared to expect from you," observed the Marquis. "But we will take no advantage of your handsome offer; the fairest way to decide which of the two shall be dispatched to England, will be for you and Alphonse to draw lots, as I recollect my grand-

father telling me was often done during the Dutch campaign."

"Agreed," exclaimed Bonchamps, "let them draw lots, for it is certainly the fairest method of proceeding, and then neither will have cause to complain that an unwelcome duty has been thrust on him."

Lots were accordingly drawn, and Alphonse lost, not a little to his secret satisfaction, though he took care to manifest no signs of emotion.

"All that remains to be done now," exclaimed Bonchamps, "is, that, as the responsible Generals of the royal army of La Vendée, we give our young diplomatist his credentials without loss of time, for it is absolutely necessary that he should set forth to-night."

"And what time do you expect him to be absent?" asked the Marquis.

"That will depend on circumstances," replied Bonchamps, "but I should say that he would be back in three weeks, or a month at furthest; and during that time, I trust we may be able to keep ourselves afloat in La Vendée." Here, turning to Alphonse, the speaker continued: "A trusty guide will be procured for you, with whom you will cross the Loire, whence you will make the best of your way to St. Malo, and thence to Jersey. It is a longer overland journey, but is less hazardous than the road through the Marais, now that it is over-

run by republicans, and with proper precautions will, no doubt, be successfully accomplished. And now, Seigneurs, that this weighty matter is decided, let us break up the council, and acquaint the troops with the decision to which we have come."

The place where this council was held, was in a small, sequestered village at no great distance from the Loire, and which stood on the edge of a wood that served as a sort of shelter for the royalists, inasmuch as it was so overgrown with trees that a passage through it was scarcely practicable for an army, especially when encumbered with baggage. Beyond this wood, the country, which was of the wildest sylvan character, was here and there broken up into enclosures and winding, high-banked cross-roads, in which a body of Vendeans, judiciously disposed, might with ease check the advance of thrice their number.

It was to this comparatively secure spot that the wreck of the royalist army had retreated, with a view of gaining time till they could decide on their future plan of operations ; and here were now assembled a body of nearly eight thousand peasants, no longer bold, self-confident, and orderly ; but filled with sullen despondency, and with difficulty rendered amenable to any sort of discipline. During the protracted discussion of their commanders, they more than once assembled in eager, noisy, and even menacing groups round the cottage

where the council was held, hoping that it would terminate in a resolution immediately to cross the Loire, where they confidently expected to have their resources multiplied tenfold, by a general rising among the Bretons.

Great, therefore, was their disappointment and indignation, when the intelligence was communicated to them that the Seigneurs had resolved, for the present, to remain on the left bank of the river, and make one last, energetic appeal to the patriotism, the courage, and the self-denial of their countrymen. They gathered together in angry and menacing masses ; the strife of words rose high and loud among them ; and for the first time, that hereditary, clannish feeling towards their chiefs, which they held as a second nature, bid fair to be destroyed. The small shattered division of the Marquis de Chatillon, which had suffered greatly during the war, their leader having always kept them on active duty, was particularly indignant at the result of the discussion, and wore all the aspect of men rendered reckless by long privations and sufferings.

“ Remain on this side the Loire ?” exclaimed some of the most determined among them, when De Larochejaquelein stepped forth to communicate the council’s decision. “ Never ! The Marquis may remain if he pleases, but we will cross to-night.”

A loud shout from the rest of the division,

which was taken up by the majority of the army, testified their satisfaction at this declaration of the mutineers.

“ For shame, men !” said Henri “ Is it thus you obey the commands of your generals ? Disperse instantly to your respective quarters, or you shall meet with the punishment due to rebels.”

“ We will not disperse,” replied five or six peasants, advancing in front of their comrades, “ till our demands are complied with.”

“ This to me !” exclaimed the fiery young chief, laying his hand on his sword, as he addressed the ringleader. “ Return to your ranks, and let me hear no more of this folly.”

A deep, emphatic murmur, swelling soon into a shout of positive defiance, was the only answer vouchsafed to this speech ; and as the soldiers began to press round Henri, it seemed for a moment that his life was in danger. One or two of the most desperate actually raised their muskets to their shoulders, exclaiming, in accents of fury : “ We are betrayed—our Seigneurs have betrayed us, and we will have revenge ;” but before they could summon up hardihood enough to put their murderous designs into execution, loud cries were heard of “ Here comes the Marquis de Chatillon !” and presently that resolute chief, who had been roused by the tumultuous uproar, was seen issuing forth from the cottage, with long and rapid strides,

accompanied by the rest of his colleagues, with the sole exception of Bonchamps, whose severe wound confined him to his truckle-bed.

The instant he appeared, the more timid among the rioters fell back, but the excitement still continued, and the clamour was renewed of “We will cross the Loire—we will not stay here to be butchered!” The Marquis took no further notice of these murmurs than by a cold, settled glance of determination and defiance, which was not without its effect on his men, who well knew his firm character, and how jealous he was of the slightest infringement on his seignorial authority.

After slowly walking once up and down the confused, tumultuous ranks of his retainers, who drew back as he came on, and looking each disconcerted individual gravely in the face, he halted in the centre, a few paces in advance of the soldiers; and while his colleagues stood by his side, prepared in case of attack to defend him to the last extremity, he exclaimed: “My friends, you have heard the decision to which your generals have come; and it is now my duty to inform you that, however unpalatable that decision may be to your feelings, it must and shall be obeyed to the letter. Is there any one here who refuses obedience to the will of his commanders? If there be, let him speak out, that I may know how to deal with him.”

For a minute or so there was a dead silence.

The men looked at each other, as if uncertain what course to take, so habitual was the awe in which they held their chief. At length a dozen or more grumbling voices were heard ; and as several of the other detachments kept pressing upon the Marquis's division, and encouraging them by their remonstrances, loud, impassioned cries were again raised of “ We will cross the Loire !”

All this time the Marquis de Chatillon kept his eagle eye fixed on one of the peasants, who was the most vociferous in his outcries ; and when the clamour was in some slight degree abated, the dauntless Seigneur exclaimed, in his loudest and most authoritative tones : “ Pierre Moralez, stand forth from the ranks !”

The individual thus addressed, cowed by his commander's air, stood irresolute ; whereupon the Marquis repeated, while his eyes glowed like live coals, beneath his knit, corrugated brows : “ Stand forth, I say !”

The peasant was about to obey, and indeed he had already advanced a pace in front of his comrades, when exclamations of contempt at his cowardice reached his ear ; and one soldier, more determined than the rest, darted up to his side, laid his hand on his arm, and forcibly kept him back.

This audacious movement did not escape the notice of the Marquis. Quick as lightning, he unsheathed his sword, and before the delinquent

had time to let go of Moralez's arm, and put himself into a posture of defence, the Seigneur rushed up to him, and with one weighty stroke cleft his skull almost to the chin.

A terrible moment succeeded this unexpected deed. Infuriated by the death of their comrade, the masses of soldiery heaved to and fro, like the billows of a troubled sea: swords were drawn; muskets uplifted to many a shoulder; and the whole of the Chiefs would, in all probability, have been sacrificed to the ungovernable passions of the peasantry, had not the Marquis de Chatillon, with admirable self-possession, thus coldly and haughtily addressed them: “ Rebels—traitors to your country and your legitimate Seigneurs, begone to your several homes, or hurry at the coward's pace across the Loire. Henceforth France disowns you as her soldiers. For me and my brother Chiefs, we will yet find Vendean who will not hesitate to stand by us in this, the crisis of our fate. Begone, I say. It is your wish to fly across the Loire—that wish is granted !”

Strange to say, not a man stirred. The calm and lofty contempt with which the Seigneur spoke, so different from the furious opposition, which the soldiers had expected, from him and his colleagues, and which they were fully prepared to resist, struck a sudden chill to the hearts of the majority, and oppressed them with a painful sense of humiliation.

The fever of the moment thus partially allayed, the old instinct of obedience began gradually to resume its ascendancy over their minds ; and they felt acutely ashamed at the idea of deserting, in his adversity, the brave chief who had so often led them to victory, and who had sustained, without a murmur, losses equal to, if not greater than, any that they themselves had experienced. Impressed with these feelings and reflections, the majority of the troops stood silent and irresolute, scarcely venturing even to raise their heads. It was evident from this that the dangerous crisis was past, and the Marquis de Chatillon seizing the favourable opportunity, repeated his commands to Pierre Moralez to stand forth from the ranks.

This time no one ventured to dispute his orders, but all remained perfectly passive, awaiting the result of the proceedings.

Meantime, the trembling culprit came slowly forth from the ranks, and stood in front of his chief, his manner indicating a bitter sense of shame and regret at the course into which he had been momentarily betrayed. The Marquis gazed at him for a minute without speaking, and at length exclaimed, slowly and emphatically :

“ Pierre Moralez, and you, soldiers, who have taken part in this disgraceful tumult, listen attentively to what I now say ; for what applies to one, applies, I grieve to state, to all. By the ordinary

rules of war, you have rendered yourselves amenable to the punishment of death. In consideration, however, of your submission to lawful authority, which, though tardy, seems sincere, and of your well-known skill and bravery as a soldier, I remit this punishment, but as it is impossible to overlook such a flagrant breach of discipline as you have committed, I dismiss you from the service of your country. Henceforth you are no longer a soldier of France!"

Tears streamed down the delinquent's eyes, as he listened to this humiliating sentence, and with a look of unutterable anguish, he threw himself at his Seigneur's feet, and implored him to grant him a pardon. Henri and his cousin, too, added their petitions for forgiveness ; but the Marquis remained inexorable, and the poor fellow, having been ordered to lay down his arms, was slowly withdrawing from among his comrades, when his chief, who was well aware that he was a great favourite with them, suddenly commanded him to halt, and exclaimed :

" Soldiers, if in accordance with your wishes, I grant a free pardon to this mutineer, will you promise me to requite my lenity by returning instantly to your duties ?"

A shout from the entire soldiery of, " We will—we will—we will live and die with you, Monseigneur !" was the unhesitating answer.

" Then you may return to the ranks, Pierre

Moralez," exclaimed the Marquis ; " and God grant that I may hear no more of these shameful disturbances. I have now to inform you, soldiers, that although your generals have resolved for the present not to cross the Loire, but to make one more appeal to the patriotism of the brave peasants of La Vendée, yet should that fail, you shall then have your wish ; the river shall be crossed, and we will continue the war, as best we may, on the side of Brittany. And now, my friends, go back to your respective quarters, and remember, that a cause like ours is seldom lost, except by the misconduct of those engaged in it."

In a few minutes the whole army dispersed, amid cheers of " Long live the Marquis de Châtillon !" " Long live our gallant Seigneurs !" and never once during the remainder of that memorable war, had the chiefs cause to complain of the insubordination or supineness of their soldiers.

CHAPTER XVI.

HAVING received his final instructions from Bonchamps and the Council, together with his credentials, which were duly attested by all the Seigneurs present, as Generals of the royalist army of La Vendée, and been furnished with such sums for his travelling expenses as the dilapidated condition of their exchequer enabled the chiefs to contribute, Alphonse set out from head-quarters in the direction of the Loire. As the district which he would have to traverse rendered it necessary that he should take every possible precaution, he was persuaded to change clothes with a Breton peasant, who chanced to be with the army; and being provided with a trusty guide, who well knew the country, he departed on his expedition on the afternoon of the day of his selection.

The district bordering on the Loire, in the

neighbourhood of Saumur, being at this period in the possession of the republicans, his guide recommended Alphonse to cross at some distance higher up the river, which, though it would lead them out of their way, would diminish the hazards of capture.

To this proposal Alphonse gave a ready assent, and they travelled on for some miles in nearly a parallel direction to the Loire ; when night coming on, and fatigue beginning to overpower them, they looked about for some place where they might enjoy a few hours' repose. But no signs of any habitation, however lowly, appeared, and they were reluctantly compelled to continue their course, in the hope that they might soon reach a farm-house or cottage.

The moon was now beginning to rise, and after toiling on for some time along craggy roads, the travellers found themselves on the skirts of a large dense wood—which might indeed, be considered a forest—when the guide proposed that, as no better shelter presented itself, they should enter and bivouac among the trees ; for as the night was dry and the wind brisk, they might contrive to make a soft, extempore couch of the fallen leaves which were everywhere strewed inches deep beneath the crowded oaks, elms, and dwarf beeches, of which the forest was chiefly composed. They advanced accordingly into its gloomy recesses, but had not penetrated

above two hundred yards among the close-wedged trees, when the guide came to an abrupt halt, and with feelings of evident alarm, pointed out to his companion what he conceived to be distant lights, which were faintly twinkling in the very heart of the wood.

Alphonse looked anxiously in the quarter to which the guide directed his attention, and was soon convinced that he was right, and that the lights, which seemed to be caused by turf or wood-fires, indicated the presence of living beings in the inmost depths of the forest. On second thoughts, however, it struck him that they might possibly be occasioned by the *ignis-fatui*, or marsh-lights, and he suggested this explanation to his guide, who shook his head, as he replied :

“ No, Monseigneur, the lights we behold proceed either from fires, or, what is more likely, from torches, and it is evident that a large party are bivouacking among the trees.”

“ Do you suppose that a corps of republicans have taken up their quarters there for the night ?” inquired Alphonse.

“ I know not what to think,” replied his companion.

“ I should conceive it more likely,” continued Alphonse, “ that a body of our peasantry, driven from their villages by the enemy, have flown for refuge there, for the spot affords good shelter, especially as

this part of the country does not appear, as yet, to have been visited by the republicans."

"I quite agree with you," said the guide, eagerly catching at a suggestion which tended to allay his apprehensions, "and if Monseigneur has no objection, we will creep stealthily forward and reconnoitre."

"A good idea," rejoined Alphonse; "and if our worst suspicions should unhappily be confirmed, we shall, no doubt, be able to effect our retreat among these trees without discovery."

They moved forward, accordingly, with the utmost caution, in the direction where they had first seen the lights. These, however, were more distant than they had supposed; and they had penetrated nearly to the centre of the forest, making their way with difficulty through the thorny under-wood, which in some places grew as thick as in an Indian jungle—while the scream of night-birds and the rustling of the wind, among the leafless branches, alone broke the stillness of the hour—before they came sufficiently near to ascertain the nature of the lights.

After scrambling, as well as they could, among thick loose beds of dry leaves, they at length drew near an open pastoral glade, whence the torch-lights—for they were now proved to be such—proceeded, and halted awhile, behind the shelter of some broad oaks, into one of which Alphonse im-

mediately climbed. The moon, which had been for some time partially obscured, now shone forth unclouded in the blue sky ; and from his elevated position the young Seigneur was enabled to convince himself of the justness of his surmise, and that he had accidentally stumbled upon a colony of peasants who had fled to this wild spot as a refuge from republican persecution.

Descending from his primitive watch-tower, Alphonse said to his companion, “ You see I was right in my conjecture : and we may, therefore, advance with safety, assured of a hospitable reception from these poor refugees.”

With these words he moved briskly on, accompanied by his guide ; but hardly had they reached the glade, whence, in the moonlight, their figures were clearly discernible, when one or two vigilant watch-dogs began howling with all their might, which gave the alarm to the peasants, a party of whom hurried forth to meet the intruders, armed with the first weapons they could lay hands on in their haste. The instant, however, they recognized the humble Breton costume, their apprehension was changed to confidence ; and one of the elders of the party, apparently a Curé, addressing the newcomers, said : “ Welcome to ‘ Le Refuge ! ’ You are, I presume, fugitives like ourselves from the violence of the republicans, and may tarry with us as long as you please,” and so saying, and followed

by his flock, who thronged round the travellers, testifying the liveliest sympathy in their fate, the hospitable Curé led them towards his rude dwelling.

As Alphonse advanced with his conductor, he was astonished to find a regular sylvan city formed out of a vast number of huts which were constructed of branches and sods of turf, and arranged in regular streets, branching off from each other at right angles. In the centre, in which was a small open square, stood a shed of more imposing dimensions intended to do duty as a church. And here resided—and had resided for many a long week—nearly four hundred peasants, men, women, and children; with little patches of garden ground—clearings from the forest—with sheds and stables for poultry and cattle; in short, with as many household conveniences as they could have had in their own village; and here, like Robin Hood and his merry men, they waited in calm, contented rural seclusion the advent of more auspicious times.

As the majority of the inhabitants of this sylvan city, which they had appropriately named “*Le Refuge*,” had retired to rest when Alphonse and his guide arrived, they were not much troubled with inquiries; and when the others, at the Curé’s instigation, had dispersed to their general dwellings, the worthy priest led them to his own primitive abode, which consisted simply of two small apartments put together in a rude but substantial form,

and was furnished with rough benches for chairs, a plain wooden table, and was strewed, by way of carpet, with dry leaves and rushes, while a space was left for a fireplace in a corner of the room, whence the smoke escaped by a small aperture which was cut high up in the wall, and was intended also to serve the purpose of a window.

Here the Curé seated his guests, and after placing before them some dried fruits and milk, listened, when the young soldier had partaken of the simple fare, to his history of the fortunes of his comrades. In return, Alphonse inquired by what laws the community to which he was then introduced were governed, as the most perfect order seemed to prevail, as in a well-disciplined camp, but none wore any symbol of command.

“My son,” replied the priest, “although we are assembled from various provinces, and have filled various stations in life, we have known better teachers in our sufferings than the most venerable laws. One great grief pervades us, one great sentiment unites us, and repels the intrusion of ordinary jealousies and temptations. If a dispute arises, or an offence is committed, a meeting of our oldest companions is convened, who settle the recompense or award the punishment. I pronounce their decision; and it is always obeyed without a murmur. We have had no recourse to punishment hitherto, beyond the exaction of a

public confession of error, or a few hours seclusion in imprisonment without a guard, until this day, when a penalty has been incurred which must, I fear, be inflicted to-morrow, and which, I believe, afflict me more than him who will bear it."

"May I know the offence which has disturbed you here?" asked Alphonse.

"Alas!" replied the Curé, "as the punishment will be endured in the face of all, the offence cannot be concealed, though I am ashamed for my people when I tell it. A youth who joined us a few weeks ago, known only by the name of Philippe, and whom we received, although his evasive answers to our inquiries raised a strong suspicion that he had been trained in evil ways, has been to-day detected in a paltry theft, and has aggravated his crime, by attempting to fix the guilt upon a lad about his own age, who shared his hovel. He no longer denies his crime, but persists in a sullen silence, and replies only to our entreaties that he would ask forgiveness by gestures of defiance. Our elders have, therefore, ordered that he shall to-morrow be led round our square, after proclamation made of his offence, and receive a single stripe from each male of our community, above the age of fifteen, who may think proper to inflict it."

"Is it not dangerous," asked Alphonse, "to place the offender thus at the mercy of an indignant people?"

“I own,” replied the Curé, “that I look forward, with equal anxiety, to the conduct of the punishers and the sufferings of the culprit; but if poor Philippe has any sense of shame remaining, I believe the disgrace will be heavier than the pain. Alas! if he would have asked pardon but an hour ago, I could have saved him, and ourselves, all; but it is now too late. You are weary—good night; let not our misfortune (for such indeed it is) disturb your repose.”

While they were thus communing, a bed of dried heath had been prepared, to which the priest pointed, as he retired, and on which Alphonse, tired with the day’s long wandering, soon found rest.

He slept till long after the sun had risen, when the sound of a collecting crowd, whose hurried steps were audible through the slight wall of the hut, broke his slumbers. He started up, and mechanically hastened to the door, in the hope that the morning’s sad spectacle was over. But he was just in time to see the culprit brought into the middle of the square to hear the amount of his offence, and the crowd silently dispersing from the spot where they had received their staves, to line the space which the culprit was to traverse. He seemed a youth of about eighteen years of age, of sallow complexion, with dark eyes flashing with defiance, though his lips, firmly compressed, spoke the suppression of some strong feeling: he looked

prepared to dare, to suffer, almost to invite the worst the populace could inflict.

At a motion from the man who had proclaimed his offence, and who was distinguished as a public officer by a dingy-yellow robe, the youth threw off his jacket, and dashed it on the ground, and returned a smile of indifference to the gesture which stopped him from displacing his vest, as if careless of further humiliation. He then slowly folded his arms, glanced hastily around him, and began to march along the line of men who in deep silence awaited him. All remained moveless ; he passed the young, the old, untouched ; some turned away their heads, some looked sadly on him ; the sternest only shook their heads as he passed. At first, wonder seemed to possess him ; he seemed as if in a dream ; then his proud head sunk, and he gazed anxiously—almost imploringly—on those he passed, as if inviting the blow ; till gradually his firmness seemed to forsake him. His knees bent and trembled, his compressed lips unclosed, and he tried to utter words, but in vain ; and the feverish spots which had burned, at first, in the centre of his cheeks, gave way to a crimson flush over his entire face and brow.

Just as he was approaching the termination of his punishment, his eyes met those of the lad whom he had falsely accused, and who stood erect, grasping his switch with convulsive force. Philippe

bent his head meekly to receive the anticipated blow ; the only one which had been even menaced by action, and the arm was raised to inflict it ; but the staff fell from the hand, and turning his head away, the injured peasant murmured :

“ Poor fellow, may God forgive you.”

This last act of forbearance utterly melted the culprit. He sunk down on his knees before the Curé, who approached to comfort him, spread his large, dark, bony hands over his face, while the tears fell in great drops through them, upon the ground.

“ I am guilty,” he sobbed out, “ I only am guilty—most guilty. Oh ! do not spare me, let me suffer ; you are too good, too kind.”

The Curé raised him, and while he still covered his face with his hands, led him into the priest’s hut, where he threw himself upon his knees, in its darkest corner, a subdued and altered man.

The crowd dispersed, and each resumed his ordinary labours, but a gloom pervaded all. The lad who had been falsely accused alone seemed light of heart. He went about trying to excuse poor Philippe, by assuring his friends that if they knew his story, they would pity rather than condemn him. Meanwhile the Curé sat down to breakfast with his guest, and gave him directions how to proceed to the coast with the best chance of security and hope of finding some vessel bound

for the Channel Islands of Britain. While they were discussing the journey, Philippe's injured companion entered the hut, and besought the Curé to see the culprit for a moment, in tones so earnest, as to preclude all hesitation. The Curé obeyed the summons, and Alphonse seized the opportunity of speaking to the youth whose generosity had deeply affected him. Auguste shrunk from his praise, and offered to retire, when summoning up courage, as by a considerable effort, he returned and said :

“ Oh, Sir, I know what poor Philippe wishes ; you alone can save him—do not refuse.”

“ I !” said Alphonse, with curiosity ; “ what do you mean ?”

“ Your guide has discovered friends among us ; he would remain here if you can spare him, and if you would take Philippe in his stead.”

Alphonse started.

“ Oh, Sir !” exclaimed Auguste, clasping his hands, while his eyes swam with tears, “ do not reject him ; he can never hold up his head among us again—at least he thinks so—and I will answer with my life that he will be faithful to you. He has been trained in vice and wickedness, starved, beaten, taught to sin as I have been to try to do well ; he never knew mercy from man till to-day, and he will never forget the lesson. Oh, Sir ! do not reject him. It may be his last chance. For pity’s sake, do not reject him !”

Before Alphonse could reply, the Curé re-entered, followed by the culprit, whose swollen eyes and trembling limbs showed how deeply he had suffered, and how great a change had passed upon him. “I have,” said the Curé, “a request to prefer, which I am not sure that you should not at once, refuse.”

“I know it already,” interrupted Alphonse, “from this noble-hearted lad, and, whether I ought to refuse it or not, I will at once grant it. Philippe, if he will, shall share my fortunes.”

At these words, Philippe burst into a passion of tears, and would have sunk on his knees before Alphonse, but he prevented him, by forcing Auguste forward, and saying: “Thank him. If to serve so poor and unfortunate a master as I is a boon, he has won it for you.”

Auguste held out his hand, Philippe could not take it, but in a moment was embraced by the generous peasant.

“No more of this,” said the Curé, “our guest must set out at once. Philippe, are you ready?”

At the word, the lad brushed off his tears, and answered: “Oh, yes, I will follow you to death!”

“It is well,” said the Curé. “Yet let me have one moment’s speech with you, before we part, to meet no more in this world.” He led Philippe into the inner room, for a few minutes only, and brought him back, with a knapsack ready strung,

which the good man had supplied with the choicest of his store of provisions for the journey. “ Now, farewell,” said he ; and with mutual kind wishes they were about to part, and Alphonse was opening the door which led into the public square, but poor Phillippe shuddered and turned pale, and exclaimed :

“ Oh, Sir, spare me that trial—not that way—not that way !”

“ If there is any other, let us take it,” said Alphonse.

“ Yes,” said the Curé, “ by the little wicket at the side of the hut, you can reach the woods unseen. You understand his wish—he would be yours only.”

They struck together into the woods, and Phillippe saw his companions of the rustic city no more. The good Curé was right. He was his master’s only, and for life.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE travellers hurried onward, in the direction pointed out by the Curé, more like men flying from some imminent danger than seeking some object of hope, although no appearance of any revolutionary band quickened their progress. Philippe, having a large knapsack tightly strapped on his shoulder, remained a little behind his new master, as if conscious of his unworthiness to bear him company, and to all the courteous questions addressed to him by Alphonse, returned only the needful replies, until Alphonse felt that he should act more kindly towards his crest-fallen attendant in remaining silent. With this tacit understanding they travelled on, without resting, till sunset, when crossing a little hollow, through which a bright stream gurgled among some scanty bushes, Alphonse paused, and turning to look for his silent

servant, perceived him close at his elbow, bending beneath the weight of his knapsack ; but trying to smile, and heat once felt a just self-reproach, for having allowed a stripling to carry so heavy a burden for so many hours without rest.

“ I know not where we may sleep, my good fellow,” said he ; “ but you must need rest and food, and I shall not be sorry to share both with you. So let us sit down and enjoy what our good Curé provided for our luncheon, but which will probably be our dinner and supper.”

With a nimble alertness which surprized Alphonse, Philippe immediately unstrapped his knapsack, and opening it, displayed not only a well-packed store of cold meat and bread, but also a bottle of brandy, which the Curé had slipped into the knapsack, and which was probably one of the last contained in the slender store of the community.

Alphonse, who during the brief operation of unpacking, had thrown himself on the shelving bank, now desired his companion to sit down beside him, and producing a large clasp-knife, began to divide the substantial part of the provision between them.

“ Oh no ! not beside you, Sir !—not *yet* beside you !” exclaimed the lad, his brow streaming with perspiration, and his eyes swimming with tears, “ not yet, Sir—a time may come.”

“ And it has come, Philippe,” said Alphonse,

seizing his hand, “the time has come, when your sincere penitence has made you the fit associate of any fellow-sinner. Here, take this; nay, I command you!” said Alphonse, as he mingled, with the pure water of the stream, a little spirit from the good priest’s bottle, and delivered it to his attendant, who thus enjoined, drained the cup, to the entire satisfaction of his master; and afterwards, though still shrinking from his side, took his part in the meal. “You will have less to carry now, Philippe,” said Alphonse, rising and assisting him to fasten his knapsack; “and as we must yet walk some miles, before we stop, tell me your story as we travel; and remember that all that is repented is forgiven.”

As they walked briskly on, Philippe told his little story—one, alas! too common to be worth relating in detail, without the expressions of shame and sorrow, gradually giving place to a firmer tone, which accompanied its recital. The child of squalid sin, his first recollection was of a filthy hovel, in the worst suburb of Paris, in which he cowered, amidst dirt and rags, from the cold; of a woman with sharp visage and sharper tongue, and long, bony fingers, which he felt in horrid dreams about his throat; and a sturdy ruffian’s kicks and blows, which almost relieved him by breaking his slumbers; of being sent abroad to steal, and beaten on his return empty-handed. Then

came the occasional advent of the police—prison after prison—the alternative of frightful companionship, and solitude peopled with nothing but thoughts of vicious indulgence, and fierce desire for vengeance, till the revolutionary tumults gave larger scope and licence for the individual enemies of property ; and he robbed and rioted in the name of freedom. Confounded at last with a knot of royalists, who were doomed to die for hallooing “ *Vive le Roi !* ” while he, in truth, was innocent of any greater crime than attempting to pick their pockets—which was almost a minor form of civic duty—he only escaped the honour of political martyrdom by a fortunate acquaintance with the jailer of the prison, in which they spent the night previous to the solemnity, and who knew his pursuits were not royalist. Forced to fly from Paris, he wandered about the country, bordering on starvation, till he lighted on the small community among whom he found refuge. Here, for the first time during his sad eighteen years’ life, he was treated with kindness ; but the kindness left him still hardened, because he knew it was given in ignorance of all he was—not to *him*. But when detected and disgraced, he felt its powers, it touched for the first time the source of human feeling in his heart ; and that source once opened, was closed no more.

As Philippe finished his tale, they reached the

top of a ridge, where, beyond a marshy flat, they discerned the water of the sea, gleaming in the western light, and fancied they made out the form of a small vessel, at the verge of the horizon, which they hoped might prove the friendly lugger they had been led to expect would hover about to convey them to some of the Channel Islands. At the same moment Alphonse heard the notes of a revolutionary air hummed by a deep bass voice, and felt his arm grasped by his companion, who motioned him to throw himself on the ground, beside some furze-bushes, which fortunately chequered the barren summit of the hill. Favoured by the bushes and the evening's darkness, they were enabled to watch, unsuspected, the movements of a republican soldier who, with fixed bayonet, was parading backwards and forwards as on guard, and was shortly afterwards joined by a comrade, who wore, like him, the tricolor cockade. Unconscious of the close vicinity of the royalists, the republican soldiers conversed at their ease, while Alphonse, dismayed by this unexpected interruption at the very moment of escape, with difficulty preserved his customary presence of mind.

Eagerly he watched every movement, and listened to every word, which seemed to indicate an intention of changing their quarters, on the part of these most unwelcome neighbours. But each momentary hope proving delusive only aggravated his suffer-

ings. The soldiers, loitering and turning back repeatedly, when he had counted upon their departure, came occasionally so near to the hiding place, that the dust, scattered by their footsteps, covered the garments of Alphonse and Philippe. For a period of time, which to him appeared interminable, Alphonse endured that keenest description of torture—continually renewed disappointment, until he could hardly refrain from discovering himself and braving the worst; but the recollection of the papers in his possession, and the thought that, in this instance, more than his own life was at stake, restrained him, and his patience was ultimately rewarded.

The soldiers retired to some distance; and the two fugitives, leaving their place of shelter, proceeded with hasty but wary steps in an opposite direction, but still keeping as near as possible to the sea. Continually, they paused in their flight, to listen, but no sound indicated the vicinity of the enemy; and at length believing themselves to be, for the time, secure from discovery, they halted in a retired spot, with the intention of resting during the hours of darkness, or until they could decide upon some means of effecting a communication with the distant vessel. “Sleep awhile, Philippe,” said his master, “and I will keep watch. You are weaker, and more wearied; I will awake you in an hour, and you shall take my place.”

At first, the boy murmured some objection ; but on Alphonse reiterating his command, he, not very reluctantly, obeyed. Throwing himself upon the ground, he placed his knapsack beneath his head, and was soon wrapt in that deep and dreamless sleep, which is the natural result and remedy of extreme physical exhaustion. For more than the appointed time Alphonse suffered him to remain undisturbed, his own thoughts were of too anxious a character to give place to bodily fatigue. The vicissitudes of the past day, the danger now hanging over him, the painful position in which he had left his father and his friends, mingled with brighter visions, as he pictured to himself the hour when he should return, with the welcome succour, to put an end to their distress, and to accompany them to victory ! Nor was his probable meeting with Annette overlooked, the chance of which had rendered this expedition doubly precious to him, and the hope of which now painfully augmented his impatience to reach the English shore. At length, having changed places with Philippe, his senses yielded to the influence of fatigue, and for awhile joys and sorrows were alike forgotten.

Alphonse was aroused from his slumbers by the hasty hand of his companion. Starting up on the instant, he laid hold of his concealed weapon, expecting some immediate danger ; but Philippe whispered to him that all was safe. The faint

light of the early morning rendered the surrounding objects dimly visible, and Alphonse noticed with amazement that Philippe's garments were dripping wet. In reply to his eager exclamation, the youth pointed to a speck upon the water, at a little distance from the shore, and informed Alphonse that a boat from the English vessel was close at hand, waiting to convey them on board.

"As soon as it was light," said Philippe, "I perceived the boat so near land, that I could easily swim to it. You were asleep, and I felt sure that all was safe, and that you would not be disturbed; and I longed so anxiously," he added, with emotion, "to do something to prove my gratitude, and to reinstate myself in your good opinion. I found, as you expected, that there were friends on board on the watch for us, or for any fugitives like ourselves. You are ready?—They will come to the shore as soon as I make a signal that all is safe."

Still overwhelmed with surprize, and scarcely venturing to believe that the means of safety were within reach, Alphonse, without pausing to reprove his rash attendant for his want of caution, followed his directions, and, within a very short period of time, found himself on board the friendly vessel, sailing with all possible speed not to the Channel Islands, but towards the much desired shore of England.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Bis dat qui cito dat,” says the adage ; and most assuredly it may be averred, on the other hand, that to give tardily is to rob the benefit of half its value, if not, indeed, to deprive it of all efficacy. What bitter heart-burning, what sickening hope deferred, what continual expectation continually disappointed, were the lot of the unhappy Alphonse during the many weeks which he passed in London ! The perils of his voyage once surmounted, and the soil of England actually beneath his feet, he had believed, with the sanguine imagination of youth, that his difficulties were at an end, and his task on the eve of its successful accomplishment. His first act—overcoming the dear wish to discover the abode of Annette—was to seek out the parties mentioned in his despatches, in order, by their aid, and without delay, to obtain

the so-much needed succours of English arms and English money, in behalf of his well-nigh vanquished friends.

As it is with the battle-fields of La Vendée that we have to do, we will not linger in the ante-chambers of Downing Street, where, with weary feet and worn-out patience, Alphonse for days and hours waited attendance. When, after considerable difficulty, he had obtained a personal interview with the heads of the government, he returned to his humble abode full of joyful expectations: the desired help was willingly promised, and the commander of the expedition named; but with this preliminary step the zeal of the ministers appeared satisfied. La Vendée should be succoured, said they; but the when and the how appeared matters of subordinate consideration. It is impossible to pourtray the agony with which, at each succeeding sunset, Alphonse lamented another day lost, while he knew that his father and his countrymen were struggling, to the death, to maintain themselves until the arrival of the expected help. Each morning, he pictured to himself the new hope with which, perhaps that very hour, his arrival was surely counted upon to preserve, at the last moment, the expiring strength of the little army. Rendered, at length, desperate with these painful considerations, he sought out Lord Moira, the appointed commander of the expedition.

“ I am come to ask of you, my Lord,” exclaimed Alphonse, in accents of despair, “ if La Vendée shall indeed be sacrificed ? A little more delay and its ruin is irretrievable ! If you do not, at once, extend your hand, it will be too late, and the noblest army—the most gallant—the most heroic Chieftains, men who, in chivalry and self-devotion, surpass the heroes of antiquity, will have perished by the hands of butchers !”

Emotion choked the further utterance of the young pleader, as he thought of his own beloved father, of the gallant Henri, and the heroic De Lescure, and their many devoted companions. Lord Moira was moved by the heart-eloquence of this appeal ; he feelingly entered into discourse with the young Frenchman, and became, at last, almost as anxious as Alphonse, to hasten to the relief of the brave men who, with so little means, had already performed such miracles, and had imparted life and vigour to a cause apparently hopeless.

Some hours—hours, it might have been, full of import not only for La Vendée, but for all Christendom—were passed by Lord Moira in consultation with Alphonse, and one or two chosen counsellors ; and the next day, matters were so far arranged that it was decided that messengers should be, at once, despatched to the Royalist Chieftains, announcing the speedy arrival of a con-

siderable force of English soldiers—Hanoverians and emigrants—in all, it might be expected, some ten thousand men. Granville was fixed upon as a suitable spot for the debarkation, and to this place the Vendees were exhorted to make their way, in order, without any loss of time, to effect a junction with the allies upon their landing. The joy with which Alphonse heard this sudden decision was almost overwhelmed in sorrow, lest duty should compel him to leave England at once, and he had not yet obtained an interview with Annette. All his efforts had hitherto proved unavailing. At the house of Mr. Danton, he had learned that that gentleman had been dead some time, and consequently Delille, on his arrival, must have been disappointed in the home he had so confidently expected. His time having been so, almost entirely, occupied with his endeavours to fulfil the objects of his mission, Alphonse had as yet had no leisure to fulfil that wish, which was hardly second in his heart to the desire of obtaining succour for his father and his countrymen. He drew aside from the council-table, and gazed vacantly from the window, endeavouring to conceal his emotion. He was disturbed in his reverie by a voice beside him.

“I am proposing,” said Lord Moira, “that our good friend, M. Perigreux, an emigrant in whom I place the strongest confidence, shall be dis-

patched upon this important errand ; and I trust M. de Chatillon will not mistake my motives in the selection. For I think it advisable," he added, in a lower tone, addressing Alphonse, " that you should remain with us until the expedition actually sets sail. I shall need all your eloquence, and all your anxiety, to assist me in overcoming the delays and obstacles which I shall yet, I much fear me, have to encounter."

A weight removed from his heart, Alphonse returned to his place, and again took part in the consultation. Preliminaries were soon decided, and the following day M. Perigreux, charged with assurances of speedy help, and many letters from Alphonse and other emigrants, departed, full of hope, to seek the Vendean chiefs. He arrived at an opportune moment.

After the departure of Alphonse, repeated defeats and disasters had well-nigh overwhelmed the little army. In desperation, they had effected the passage of the Loire, and in confusion and distress had landed on the shores of Brittany. Death had already robbed them of some of the best and bravest of their band. Bonchamps terminated the life of a hero with the death of a saint: and De Lescure was mortally wounded. At this juncture, Henri de Larochejacquelein was selected to fill the onerous post of chief, the most fortunate choice possible at such a moment. In an

extremity in which the wisdom of the sagest councillors would have been powerless, the daring impetuosity and dauntless resolution of the young hero, proved availing. Not only did Larochejacquelein, who had barely attained his twentieth year, reduce order from apparently inextricable confusion,—not only did he infuse hope in place of the most abject despair, but he led the broken-hearted, vanquished, dispirited Vendeans into battle, and achieved with them an overwhelming victory ! Flying through the ranks, he addressed them in words of burning eloquence and most infectious enthusiasm. “ We must conquer ! ” he exclaimed ! and they did conquer.

On the 25th of October, 1793, the battle of Château Gonthier witnessed the last, and not the least brilliant, victory of the Vendeans. Then, in that moment of victory, when the republican general had reported to the Convention, “ the rebels may drive us to Paris if they choose,” the expectation of the English succours arrested them in their victorious career ; and instead of marching in triumph to the capital, the victorious army, unfortunately for themselves, directed their course towards the coast. Here it was that Monsieur Perigreux found them, and added another drop to their brimming cup of joy.

“ At Granville,” said the Envoy, “ the English army will be with you ; make your way there—

establish yourselves there—and be ready to unite with them. Already is the expedition about to sail, and Lord Moira and Alphonse de Chatillon are impatiently looking forward to the hour when, landing in France, they will accompany you to victory. The Princes, be assured, will not be long before they hasten to put themselves at the head of the gallant defenders of the throne."

"Vive le Roi!" burst in acclamations from the exulting royalists; and "Vive les Anglais!" added Henri, in the exuberance of his gratitude.

Towards Granville then, full of joyful expectation, the triumphant but much disabled army took their way. It was now the beginning of November.

CHAPTER XIX.

HIS anxieties upon the subject of his mission being, for the moment, at an end, Alphonse directed all his energies to the discovery of the abode of Annette. The most painful misgivings, at times, overcame his naturally sanguine imagination; yet, true to his better nature, he hoped on in the face of continual disappointment. Philippe had so endeared himself to his master, by his affectionate zeal, and by the anxious obedience with which he fulfilled the most trifling injunctions, that Alphonse, longing for sympathy and counsel, no matter from however humble a source, had confided to him, in part, his anxiety to discover the abode of the exiled Delille and his daughter; but vain had hitherto been their unceasing exertions. In the crowded streets and suburbs of London, to discover two insignificant individuals,

appeared impossible. At first Alphonse had securely counted upon discovering Annette, some Sunday, at chapel; but unfortunately for his hopes, there were many emigrants at that time in London, and the Catholic chapels were few, many a private dwelling was, in consequence, sanctified by the performance of the holy services, where numbers of fugitive and almost penniless nobles would kneel around some poor priest, who had fled for his life before the soldiers of the republic; and the 'Te Deum' would be offered up with the same fervour as it had been a few months before, in the presence of royalty, at the altars of *Notre Dame*. At some assemblies of this kind Alphonse was accustomed to perform his devotions, during his residence in London, and, without doubt, the pious Annette was, every week, in the habit of attending some one or other of these newly-constructed sanctuaries, but how was he to discover where? Nevertheless, every holy-day Alphonse visited every chapel he could discover, manifesting at times, we are sorry to admit, more curiosity than devotion.

Meanwhile the time passed on, and between his impatience to meet with his beloved, and his anxiety to hasten to his father's aid, Alphonse grew ill in body and mind. Lord Moira was exerting every energy to equip his expedition, but as yet the decisive moment was deferred. One morning Alphonse received a message from

that nobleman, appointing to see him at a somewhat early hour.

The poor youth had passed a sleepless night, then no very unusual occurrence with him, and without any appetite for his breakfast, he proceeded towards the square, in which Lord Moira dwelt, a little before the appointed time. Sick at heart with continual hope deferred, he walked on moodily, with his eyes bent to the ground. When, startled by an exclamation in a woman's voice, he looked up and beheld before him, his long sought Annette ! Pale and thin, and evidently much worn out by suffering since he had parted with her on the coast of Noirmoutier ; but the same bright eyes were bent tenderly upon him ; the same sweet smile brightened her countenance as she gazed on him—the object of her thoughts and prayers, but whom she had latterly almost mourned as dead. Unable at first to ask or reply to anything in their emotion, the long parted lovers walked together, they knew not where. As the trees of St. James's Park came in sight, Alphonse forgetting his appointment with Lord Moira, drew his companion to a retired spot, and seating himself by her side. “God be thanked, Annette!” he exclaimed, “I have found you at last ; though perhaps to lose you again immediately ! I have suffered more than I can tell you ;” and almost overpowered with emotion,

he rapidly narrated to his anxious and trembling hearer what had happened since their parting—his mission to England ; his long disappointments, and his repeated attempts to discover her. “ But now, God be thanked, it is all repaid,” exclaimed the lover, gazing tenderly upon the dear face which, beneath his looks beamed with smiles and glowed with blushes.

“ Again I see you ; again I hold your hand in mine. I forget the sorrows of the past ; the difficulty, perhaps the death, awaiting me in the future—the happiness of the present moment is enough. Again I say, God be thanked ! my sweet Annette.”

The striking of the church clock interrupted the delightful interview. Annette started : “ I must leave you now, dearest Alphonse,” she whispered, timidly ; “ but my father will wish to see you. You will come ? When ?”

“ As soon as I have performed a duty I ought now to be attending to. Where shall I find you ? Or let me take you home now, dearest.”

But Annette was not going home directly ; she would not detain him, and giving him the address of her present abode, she turned away ; and Alphonse with a glad heart, directed his steps to Lord Moira’s dwelling.

CHAPTER XX.

IT was not until a late hour in the afternoon, in the gloom of a November twilight, that Alphonse, after a lengthened interview with Lord Moira, arrived at the very humble abode mentioned by Annette. Groping up the narrow staircase, he knocked at the first door on the second flight, according to the directions of the somewhat surly dame who had admitted him—the landlady of poor lodgers. To his great satisfaction, he was bidden to enter, in the well remembered tones of his old friend. Obeying the summons with alacrity, he found himself in a small and ill-furnished room, where a little fire burned cheerfully, and by its light Alphonse recognised Delille, apparently twenty years older than when he had parted with him some months before. Disturbed by the entrance of a stranger Delille looked at first

anxiously, and then joyfully, towards the new comer; but his astonishment, as he embraced Alphonse, was so evident, that the latter demanded in surprise, if Annette had not mentioned to her father his expected visit.

“Annette!” exclaimed Delille, “Oh you met Annette this morning, and she told you? She has not yet come home. It is not five o’clock yet, and she does not come back till half-past, or it may be twenty minutes, for these gloomy evenings she walks quickly. She does not like the dark walk, and she will not let me fetch her. Poor girl! God bless her!”

Ignorant of the meaning of these allusions, Annette’s lover inquired, in amazement, where she was, and what could detain her at such an hour.

The old man burst into tears.

“Then she did not tell you! then you do not know all our troubles and all her goodness to her poor father—but God will reward her! God be praised! you are come, perhaps, to put an end—?”—he hesitated, and looked inquiringly at Alphonse. Still anxious to know Annette’s actual occupation, Alphonse hastily mentioned the object of his visit to London, and in accents of despair, that would have greatly astonished his father and his companions in arms, had they overheard him, he expressed a fear that in a few days he should be compelled to return to France to encounter anew the perils of war.

"But," he added, recovering his wonted hopefulness, "success must now inevitably be with us. The King will be restored, France will be at peace, and I will come myself, once more, to England to claim my Annette, and to conduct you both back to your native country, to enjoy years of happiness at Chatillon."

Delille sighed heavily.

"Before that day, Alphonse, I shall be sleeping in a foreign grave, and my poor girl will be alone among strangers—penniless, friendless—her beauty exposing her to insult, and her gentle, sensitive heart rendering every indignity and humiliation doubly painful to her. Oh, my child!—oh, my poor Annette!" cried the unhappy father, wringing his hands.

Alphonse, himself inexpressibly pained and agitated by the gloomy thoughts which Delille's words suggested, essayed in vain to comfort him. A ray of hope suddenly illumined Delille's countenance.

"You will not forget her, Alphonse? Promise me—swear to me—that no soldier's duty, no consideration of your father or your country, or any fancied obligation of honour will prevent you, when I am gone, from hastening to her side and protecting her from insult."

While Alphonse was endeavouring to soothe his friend by every protestation that love could suggest,

the door gently opened, and Annette entered—entered with her quiet smile and cheerful, serene deportment, like an angel of peace to calm those perturbed hearts. For a moment she suffered Alphonse to embrace her tenderly, and as he held her in his arms—his heart saddened by their past separation and agitated by her father's fears for the future—he was tempted to abandon all—his father, his King, and his country, to remain in ignominious exile, the husband and protector of his adored Annette. Only for one moment did the temptation overpower him ; it passed away, and better thoughts again inspired him. He felt, as he looked upon the pure and noble countenance of his beloved, what the gallant Lovelace so beautifully sung :

“ I could not love *thee*, dear, so much,
Loved I not *honour* more !”

Annette, endeavouring to conceal her own emotions, and to dissipate those which were so plainly evidenced by her companions, busied herself with preparing the evening meal, talking meanwhile with vivacity, perhaps assumed, or perhaps the result of the mingled feelings which were agitating her loving heart.

“ See, my extravagance,” she said, placing a dish of grapes upon the table, “ this little bunch has cost me more, far more, than a dozen of those large baskets that we used to have at home ! but *n'im-*

porte ! my father loves them, and this evening, as thou art here," she added, turning with a timid tenderness towards Alphonse, and addressing him, for the first time, by that pronoun which, in France, is only used between the dearest friends, or the nearest relations—"as thou art with us, I thought we would try to forget this foggy London, and fancy ourselves again by the dear banks of the Loire. 'Voilà pour-quoi mes raisins !'" she added, playfully. And the gloom of London was forgotten by the exiles. Past sorrows and future dangers were for the moment unheeded, or only served to heighten the happiness of the present moment. Swiftly and sweetly did the hours pass by, enlivened by the gentle gaiety of Annette, and the passionate devotion of the happy Alphonse ; but the countenance of the father, although he smiled, was sad—and Alphonse, divining the thoughts which occasioned that gloom, himself relapsed into his former anxious mood, and again demanded the particulars of the Delilles residence in London.

With an aching heart did Annette's lover, sitting by her side with her hand clasped tenderly in his own, listen to her father's mournful revelation. With feelings of mingled indignation and horror he learned the various insults and misfortunes which had befallen them---how, after a perilous voyage they had reached the door of that

old friend by whom they had expected to be welcomed with open arms, only to find that he was in his grave, and to be coldly repulsed by the new inhabitants of his dwelling.

Vain had been every attempt to discover friends or to obtain assistance, until worn out with anxiety, Delille had fallen ill, their little savings had all been dissipated before the doctor's expenses had been defrayed ; but he, charmed by the devotion of Delille's daughter, had generously declined any proposition of payment, and more than that, he had obtained for Annette a situation as governess, by means of which she was at present supporting herself and her father. Tears again interrupted Delille's recital, and tears were in the eyes of Alphonse as he turned and clasped in his arms that beloved girl, whose generous exertions, and whose unrepining self-sacrifices rendered her so worthy of his respect and admiration as well as of his devoted love.

“ Oh, my Annette, what have you suffered ? what have you gone through ? ” he cried, “ while I have comforted myself, in all my dangers, by the thought that you were safe, and if not quite happy, at least content. Can I leave you thus ? to continue this laborious work—you, who are more fitted to be a countess or a queen.”

But Annette gently interrupted this rhapsody, by reminding her lover that her lot was far more

enviable than that of many of the noblest ladies of her country, at that moment.

“ I have seen them—some of them,” she cried, “ and what have *I* done or suffered in comparison ? There are now in London, young girls brought up in France as princesses, and noble women who have all their lives been surrounded with respectful attendants and luxurious comforts, who are compelled to perform the most menial services, and they do so without a murmur. Oh, never, surely were they so truly great, when their word was law to hundreds, as now when they show that they can serve and suffer with meek humility as christian women should ! and you speak of *me* with pity. I who am blest—who am doubly blest—for my dear father is now well again, and I have seen thee, Alphonse, and thou lovest me still.”

Who could yield to despondency in the presence of such noble courage ? and Alphonse parted from his betrothed, that evening, with a heart nerved to encounter every sorrow and a faith strong to hope for a bright dawn after the darkness. Sorrow was nearer to him than he quite expected. The next day on again repairing to Lord Moira, that nobleman hailed him with gladness.

“ Good news, Chatillon—we are ready at last. In two days, or three at the furthest, I count upon our departure.”

But his exulting tone met with no fitting

response. Instead of uttering glad thanksgivings, to Lord Moira's astonishment, the young Frenchman, who had so ardently implored help for his countrymen, turned pale, muttered some inarticulate words, and seemed overpowed with emotion, evidently of a painful nature. To his kind friend's anxious and surprised inquiries, Alphonse replied by making him acquainted with his embarrassments.

"Of course I am rejoiced," said the poor youth, attempting to smile; "I thank God for the news your lordship gives me. I would gladly give my life to hasten the succour of La Vendée—but this doubt, this dread of the future—to leave her in this painful situation with the probability of her father's death: oh, believe me, it is worse than encountering the enemy's cannon."

"I can well believe you, my poor Alphonse," said the kind-hearted nobleman, grasping his hand. "But courage, man: I know you too well to suppose you would desert your post for a lady-love—nor would she smile upon you could you do so. Much as the women may love us, believe me they value our honour far above our safety. You must go with us. Yes, I know—hear me out—I say, you are determined to go with us, and as it is impossible that the fair lady should accompany you, even were she already your wife—the separation, for a time only, let us hope, is inevitable. Now

you know the worst, you will face it like a man. We will consult together when I see you again—can it be this evening?—as to what can be done for your friends during your absence. In the meanwhile, you will be good enough to attend to those matters of bussiness I named to you yesterday, and keep a good heart. Duty is the soldier's watch-word—and depend upon it, in the long run it brings happiness, or, at least, consolation, to us all."

Alphonse had no cause to repent of his confidence in the kind sympathy of Lord Moira. The generous soldier fully entered into his young friend's embarrassment at leaving his betrothed in circumstances so full of doubt and difficulty, while he should himself be away encountering the perils of war. When, according to his appointment, Chatillon returned to him in the evening, Lord Moira volunteered to procure some honourable employment for Delille, by means of which the necessity of his daughter's labours would be prevented, while, at the same time, the spirits of the desponding man would be raised by the sense of independence. Moreover, Lord Moira promised for Annette the protection of his mother, the widowed Countess, and suggested also as a further security in case of her father's death, that Alphonse should make her his wife before he left England, as Madame de Chatillon might be exempt from

many difficulties, from which even the sanctity of misfortune might not be sufficient to protect Annette Delille.

“And now,” said the kind soldier, shaking the hand of his *protégé*, “set your heart at ease; and be ready in three days to set forth on our long deferred expedition. God defend the right! We shall soon let your Vendeans know that we have, among us, men as brave and gallant as themselves. We shall make the ‘citizens’ cry for that quarter which they never give! You are satisfied now? Go to your fair Annette, and to-morrow bring her here, and make her known to Lady Moira.”

With feelings of gratitude which he found it impossible to express, Alphonse quitted the generous friend, whose sympathy for others endeared him to many hearts, pondering over the conversation as he turned towards the residence of the Delilles. Alphonse gladly admitted the wisdom and prudence of the whole arrangement. Delille heard him with unmixed satisfaction, the lonely position of Annette in case of his own death having long filled her father’s heart with apprehension; and now he so heartily and strenuously seconded the proposition, that the startled maiden could hardly express an opinion, and every preparation for the hasty marriage had been arranged, before the intended bride could resolve upon any decision.

Unconvinced by her father's prudent arguments, and not quite persuaded by her lover's prayers, Annette yielded at last to a reason suggested by her own heart, but which she confided to neither her father nor Alphonse. The dread that ever haunted the tender maiden during her lover's absence with the army, that the perils of war would put an end to that beloved life, had at times over-powered her to such a painful extent that she had continually seen before her visions of Alphonse wounded, and no one by to succour him—Alphonse left dying on the lonely battle-field, or Alphonse on a sick bed, and strangers' hands ministering to him; but now, thought the romantic Annette, should any accident befall him, his wife would have a right to fly to his side, to watch by him, and if it must be, to close his eyes and die beside him. And with this sad hope, she gave a willing consent to become the wife of Alphonse before his departure from England.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHEQUERED with clouds and sunshine, fit emblem of her fate, was the bridal morning of Annette Delille. None of the customary insignia of a wedding marked that important incident in her destiny. No train of bridesmaids surrounded her, no joyous friends congratulated her, no husband's home was open to receive her. Simply attired, in the presence only of her father and the ministers of the ceremony, in a little chapel where the rights of her religion were administered almost by stealth, Annette gave her hand to the lover of her youth—gave it with abounding love and implicit trust. No shadow of anxiety respecting his affection, his honour, and his abiding tenderness dimmed her brow, and so the bride was hardly to be pitied, although the orange-blossoms and satin ribbons were wanting to her costume, and no

admiring crowds thronged around her with acclamations. Hand in hand, united for ever, Alphonse and Annette turned from the altar, which had bound them by indissoluble ties. The afflictions of the past and the gloom of the future cast no shadow over their hearts at that moment. They were happy with the joy of the present hour, and the certainty that only death could disunite them. Circumstances might separate them for a while, but their hearts and their destinies were for ever linked together.

And bitter as was the apprehension of the coming parting, they were in truth far happier than many thousands whom the world deems fortunate. Better, immeasurably better the actual intervention of sea and land than the apparent union of estranged hearts and uncongenial sympathies. Better a life devoted to some glorious aspiration, and a heart filled with some noble love, even if the aspiration prove illusive, and the love be never crowned with happiness ; better such ennobling emotions than that blighting atmosphere, fatal to every moral beauty, where the rays of hope cast no cheering sunshine, where discord frets the spirit, or passive apathy chills the heart—the inevitable results of the absence of sympathy or the satiety of passion. No such gloomy consequence could follow the union of Annette and her lover, for their affection was of that pure and deep character which can neither

be diminished by absence nor by the yet more trying test of constant intercourse. Heavy shadows hung over their path, it is true, but the darkness was all from without. Within their hearts, mutual love and trust in God abounded, and so they parted with words of hope on their lips, and assured confidence in their tearful looks, though “none could tell if e'er again should meet those mutual eyes.” The long deferred expedition has set sail, and Alphonse is again on his way to fight for his country and his king.

And Annette is tearfully gazing on her wedding-ring, but we shall not venture to fathom the depth of her sad, sweet thoughts.

CHAPTER XXII.

Too late! the saddest words in any human language! the simple, eloquent epitaph of how many buried hopes—of how many departed chances of achieving good or acquiring glory! Too late. The agony of this sad truth smote with a fearful intensity on the ardent heart of Alphonse. His worst anticipations of evil were realized, at the very moment when he was fondly believing them to be vain. No succour to his father and his gallant friends was in his power. Too late the promised help had been accorded. Before the English sails appeared in the offing of the French coast, the last Vendean banner had departed from before the walls of Granville. Too late came the friendly hand, and its tardy appearance seemed a mockery.

The royalist army, faithful to the arrangement, and reckoning upon the promises of the English

envoys, had, notwithstanding many disasters and continual defeats, made their way to the coast. They had arrived before Granville in the second week of November, at the very time when Alphonse, in London, was urgently imploring the fulfilment of the reiterated promises of the Government, and while Lord Moira was endeavouring by every possible exertion, to overcome the seemingly insurmountable obstacles which continually furnished some new delay to this all-important expedition, of which he had in vain been appointed Chief. At the very moment while these fruitless prayers were being uttered, and while these plausible promises were being repeated, at Granville a thousand eyes were eagerly turning to the unresponsive sea.

No signal replied to the anxious gaze of the Vendéans, no white sail reanimated their hearts with the assurances of help. With the pangs of hope deferred, they struggled to maintain their position, and to establish themselves in the town, but in vain. Unaided from without, uncheered by hope from within, they sustained a severe defeat, and were driven from before Granville with great loss. During the retreat, the prospect of recrossing the Loire again reanimated for awhile the hearts of the peasantry. Stimulated by the enthusiastic efforts of their chiefs, they obtained an occasional victory over their relentless opponents. But, at

length the walls of Angers witnessed their discomfiture, and seized with a sudden panic, the wretched remnant of the royalist forces retreated in confusion to the Loire, and sought with vain and intemperate haste to re-cross that river which divided them from their homes. Both Saumur and Tours, the nearest points by which a transit could be effected, were however held in possession and strongly garrisoned by the republicans. The hills and vallies of their beloved land were within sight of the hapless Vendeans, separated by an impassable barrier, that river which a few weeks before they had crossed with impatient and joyous expectation ! The inclemency of the season increased their already overwhelming troubles.

It was now December, and the unusual severity of the weather was cruelly felt by the natives of the sheltered Bocage, added to which their provisions were already failing, and sickness and death were making fearful ravages in frames worn out by disappointment, and uncheered by any prospect of success. When that moral energy, whose aliment is hope, has once abandoned the heart, it becomes an easy prey to physical depression. And the moral and physical evils which beset the retreating Vendeans were by no means imaginary. At every step almost, some dying wretch had to be abandoned to his fate, and his mournful cries, long after his own heart was still, re-echoed with

a fearful intensity in the hearts of his miserable comrades. Tears were continually rising to the eyes “unused to the melting mood,” of the once gay and vivacious Henri. But his energy never drooped, and every new evidence of the cruel suffering of his unhappy comrades only augmented his anxious endeavours to rescue them from their impending fate.

After an hour’s silence, during which he had been wrapt in such apparently deep and painful meditation that no one had ventured to disturb him, the young Commander called the Marquis de Chatillon and the other chiefs to his side. “The passage of the river is hopeless!” he exclaimed, “I would be the last to abandon the chance if a chance existed—to remain here is only to expose ourselves to a certain and lingering death. Let us change our course, and turn towards Le Mans. Once established there, we shall have time to recruit our strength, and to form new, and God grant it, more successful combinations. What say you?”

“But the road to Le Mans is intercepted by the river.”

“By marching at once upon La Flèche,” replied Henri, “we shall cross the bridge there before the enemy discover our plan, or have time to interrupt us.”

The old Marquis sighed and shook his head,

then with a brightening face he exclaimed : “ So be it ! with all my heart. It will give one last chance to our allies. Perhaps even now they may be near. Perhaps Alphonse—oh, my boy—my poor boy !” cried the Marquis, yielding to an unusual burst of emotion, “ shall I ever behold you again ?”

Taking advantage of this assent to his proposal, Henri at once proceeded to give the necessary orders to the men. So dispirited, so worn-out and heart-broken were they, that hardly a murmur was raised by the most refractory at the unwelcome order of retreat, and not a response greeted the cheering assurances of the General that the journey to Le Mans would be the precursor to rest and refreshment, and ultimate victory. As they were leaving the enemy behind, the rear of the army was strongly protected under the command of the Marquis. While Henri, now leading the way, and now returning to converse with his old comrade, and now joining one party and now another, endeavoured, but for some time in vain, to infuse, according to his wont, courage into the drooping hearts of his men. At length to a certain extent he succeeded. The generous nature of the sorely tried but heroic Vendéans responded to his appeal, conscious of the goodness of their cause—a cause as sacred in their eyes as that of the scollop-shelled pilgrims of old—they rallied for a while, and as

they drew near La Flèche, the prospect of a certain and speedy passage across the river, and rest and plenty on the other side gave a buoyancy to their movements, and a gaiety to their spirits, to which for many a long day they had been sadly strangers.

Towards evening they approached the spot fixed upon for the passage of the river, and Larochejaquelein ever fearful of a surprize, had returned once more towards the rear, to consult with the Marquis as to the danger of pursuit from the enemy whom they had left so far behind. Reassured as to this cause of alarm, the young General breathed more freely, but even while he was thus conversing with his companions, and congratulating them upon their safe arrival, a sudden shock electrified the little party. Some imperceptible movement pervaded the whole army, and even Henri, unconscious of the cause, felt panic-stricken. Putting spurs to his horse he galloped forward, and then stopped, petrified with horror. No wonder the scarce hopeful soldiers had again abandoned themselves to despair ! Before them was the river and the broken fragments of that bridge which they had expected to cross in safety, while, on the other side, the road which was to lead them to peace and prosperity, gleamed with armour, and bristled with bayonets ! The enemy were before them—expecting them, and intercepting their way.

A groan expressive of unutterable anguish burst from the lips of the disappointed Chief: "Oh, God!" he exclaimed, "forsake us not yet! not yet!" Then, as if he expected some visible answer to his prayer, he looked around with an eager but vacant stare.

In a few minutes the Marquis was by his side, his face calm and full of gloom, as it had, almost invariably, appeared of late. "Let us charge them," he exclaimed, in a voice of mingled resolution and despair. "Let us die like men, and not wait to be hunted down like beasts of prey."

"Not yet!" exclaimed Henri. "To charge them now, would be to rush on certain destruction."

"Larochejaquelein was not wont to be so prudent!" said the Marquis with some bitterness.

The indignant blood flushed the face of Henri, but checking himself, he sadly replied: "Were Larochejaquelein alone, he might throw away a life, which, God knows, is now burdensome enough; but while I command these men their lives are a sacred charge. I will lead them to death in the cause of their country and King; but, by God's blessing, I will not abandon them to a useless massacre."

"You are right, boy," rejoined the Marquis; "forgive me."

Further discourse was interrupted by a sudden tumult at one of the out-posts, and in answer to

his anxious inquiry, Henri learned that spies had been seized, endeavouring to make a secret entry into the camp. Fearful lest his men, in their present reckless condition, should commit any unnecessary violence, Henri hurried in the direction of the tumult, disregarding the exclamation of the Marquis, whose once kind and humane nature had been changed into sternness and cruelty since the wanton murders of Chatillon, “Hang the spies without a question ! Don’t listen to them, Henri !”

As Larochejaquelein drew near the prisoners, their appearance was not very formidable. They were three in number, and wore the dress of Breton peasants, and the one whose face was turned towards the Chief was evidently no more than he pretended. Before the young commander could examine the features of the others, he was startled by an exclamation in a long familiar voice, and leaping from his horse found himself in the arms of Alphonse. The emotion which brought tears to the eyes of the two friends was not caused by the pleasure of their sudden meeting. Deeper feelings agitated the hearts of both. The dear hopes they had cherished, the bright visions they had contemplated together had, since their last meeting, been utterly and miserably annihilated. Not a word escaped the lips of either as they pressed each other’s hand, and mournfully looked

into the other's face, till Henri, reading in Alphonse's eye the question his voice refused to utter, exclaimed :

“ Come, let me lead you to your father, he is well !”

“ Thank God !” cried Alphonse, with emotion ; “ I never expected to see him again.”

Even in that solemn moment, Henri could not refrain from reading his old friend a lesson, with something of his former joyous manner :

“ Forgive me, Marquis,” he said, as they approached the old General, “ forgive me, if I have disregarded your advice, and questioned the prisoner before I hanged him.”

The surprize and emotion of the Marquis, as he again beheld his son, can be better imagined than described. A few moments passed in cordial greeting and hasty explanation, and then Henri called upon Alphonse for counsel, in the difficult position in which he found himself.

“ But stay,” he cried, interrupting him, “ you come from Le Mans, you say. How did you pass the river ? You did not cross the bridge ?”

“ No, before my arrival, the bridge and the surrounding country were in the hands of the enemy ; my guide led me by a ford some few miles further up.”

“ A ford !” cried Henri, with vehemence. “ My God, I thank thee, my prayer is answered !” Then

turning to his startled companions, he rapidly proposed dispatching, at once, a party across the ford, and surprizing the enemy in their turn. It was well that a new hope had restored the enthusiasm of the young General, for it was now sorely required to animate his desponding troops. An alarm was already raised in the rear that the enemy were pursuing them from behind. Desiring the Marquis to repair again to his post and to strengthen and encourage the rear-guard, Henri, aided by Alphonse, proceeded to put in execution his new design. Having chosen some of the boldest and bravest of his horsemen, under cover of the darkness, the young General, guided by Alphonse, traversed the river at the fording place, and coming upon the enemy by surprize, bore down upon them as impetuously and as boldly as if he had ten thousand men at his back. The fortune of war once more sided with the young hero, and the panic-stricken republicans, to the number of four or five thousand, fled at the shouts of "Vive le Roi!" and the swords of a few royalist horsemen. The old frank smile once more lit up the now faded features of young Henri as he directed and assisted his victorious men to build up the bridge for the passage of the army.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DURING the brief interval of repose which followed upon this success, Alphonse narrated to his anxious friends the result of his mission to England, and endeavoured to account for the unfortunate hesitation on the part of the allies which had occasioned the long and disastrous delay. He spoke with enthusiasm of the generous eagerness of Lord Moira, and mentioned the ready sympathy which he had met with from the English people. His tears, rather than his words, told of the agony he had endured on discovering that the all-important succour had arrived too late. Yet himself even then unwilling to regard the evil as irremediable, he had implored Lord Moira, who readily sympathised with his hopeful anticipations, not to abandon the cause of the Vendéans until some certain intelligence could be obtained from

the Chiefs of the army. In consequence of which resolution the English fleet was yet hovering about the coast, while Alphonse, anxious under all circumstances to share the fortunes of his friends, had landed almost alone, and after many difficulties, having obtained a peasant guide, had succeeded in discovering the traces, and ultimately reaching the presence of his friends. He now besought the Chiefs to re-consider their plans, to return once more to the coast, to effect a junction with the English forces, and aided by their co-operation, to renew the campaign with every prospect of ultimate success. No cheering response greeted these aspirations ; even the sanguine Henri abandoned the scheme as hopeless. A few days, however, all agreed in believing, would be decisive not alone of the fortunes of the war but of the fate of each one of them individually. Once established at Le Mans, towards which town they were now approaching, they would have a full opportunity of considering their future course, and towards Le Mans the thoughts of all were turned in anxious and sorrowful apprehension. Alphonse in his turn eagerly listened to the chequered story of the many sufferings and brief triumphs of his comrades in arms, during his absence in England.

The saddest incidents of the mournful record, were the deaths of De Lescure and Bonchamps, “ And yet,” exclaimed Henri, with kindling eyes

as he spoke of them, “ we should rather exult than weep at such a close to such careers. The deaths of Christians terminated the lives of heroes. The last act of Bonchamps, was to rescue from the vengeance of the soldiers who adored him, the prisoners whom they were about to sacrifice in a natural spirit of revenge, for his death-wound. His spirit seemed to pause in its very flight to Heaven, to publish that last decree of mercy : ‘ Spare the prisoners.’ The guns were already pointed when the words were uttered ; but the revengeful love which prompted, yielded to the obedient love which forbade the act. Equally sublime was the death of De Lescure ; his weeping wife was by his side, and in his last address to her, the tenderness of the husband, and the sorrow of the patriot, mingled with, and yielded to the aspirations of the Christian. ‘ For myself,’ he said, ‘ I have no fears, I have often seen death before me, and it has no terrors ; I hope to go to Heaven !’ It is a privilege,” exclaimed Henri, as these recollections overpowered him: “ It is a privilege to have known, and to weep for men like these ! Would I had died beside them !”

“ Not so,” interrupted Alphonse, “ the General must live for his army. You Larochejaquelein, more than all others, must live to rejoice in the victory attributable to no one more than you ; for that victory, believe me, is at hand !” And

Alphonse turned for corroboration towards his father, but no sympathising glance responded to his own. In the place of hope, which had long since died away, an impassible firmness marked the features of the Marquis. The terrible indications of a grand despair were to be read in that stern, compressed lip, and cold severe eye; that despair, which as it can hope nothing, fears nothing. Not the abject emotion which prompts the coward to fling down his arms, but the reckless temerity which impels the forlorn hope in the face of certain death: a state of mind in which man is the most terrible, and the least human.

As Alphonse looked upon the hard, cold countenance of the Marquis, and recalled the days when that face had beamed with tenderness, he turned aside and dashed away the unbidden drops which dimmed his gaze. During the rest of the march, Alphonse made no effort to dispel the gloom of his companions. But gloom and despondency soon disappeared from the countenance of the young Commander, giving place to an indomitable energy. On arriving at Le Mans, Henri was enabled to afford his army the repose they so much required, while he endeavoured, by almost super-human efforts, to rekindle their enthusiasm, and prepare them for that inevitable encounter with a redoubtable enemy which was daily to be anticipated.

The condition of the Vendean army, might well have dissipated the hopes of a more sanguine, and frustrated the combinations of a more skilful General.

Worn out and weary, depressed in body and mind, with frames emaciated by suffering, and hearts chilled by despondency, the majority of the peasants were in a condition to offer little resistance to vigorous and well-appointed troops; added to which, the helpless crowd of women and children, of sick and dying, which accompanied the royalists, encumbered their movements, and exhausted the already slender provisions so sorely required to invigorate and animate the drooping soldiers. The enemy, on the other hand, while the Vendees were endeavouring to recruit their feeble strength, were assembling from all quarters, led on by chiefs, whose names were sufficient to ensure victory. Forty thousand powerful troops thronged under the banners of Kleber, Marceau, and Westermann; while to encounter them, Henri could only muster from his motley assemblage, twelve thousand soldiers in fit condition to fight.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE anticipated attack was not long delayed. The well-appointed army of the republicans advanced, with the resolution of men confident in their own strength, and yet conscious that they had no mean resistance to encounter from the little band of heroes, who had already proved, on more than one occasion, that the battle is not always to the strong. Henri had disposed his forces with admirable judgment, and had appointed the Commanders with that happy appreciation of the peculiar abilities of each individual, which is one of the most significant indications of good generalship. Near the town was a sombre wood of fir, the shelter of which was calculated to prove an efficient auxiliary. Here Alphonse was stationed with a handful of brave troops, and well did these gallant men fulfil the task entrusted to them. So effective were their

efforts and so hearty was their zeal that the left side of the republican army was long held in check. On the other hand Stofflet, with his once indomitable troops, yielded, after a noble resistance, to the vigorous charge of Kleber. He who was, hereafter, to marshal the forces of the great Captain on the shores of Africa was not to be repulsed by a few wearied troops, although organized with consummate skill and animated by a noble spirit. Bearing all before him, at the head of his victorious soldiers, Kleber pursued the retreating Vendees into the town of Le Mans, but here he found the enemy at bay, and even his vigorous and exulting forces quailed before the deadly determination of the foes who there encountered them. The indomitable Henri and the resolute Marquis de Chatillon, supported by men nerved with the resolution of despair, sustained an opposition which the circumstances of the case rendered almost incredible. The horrors of an ordinary battle-field become insignificant, when compared with the terrible and revolting nature of a conflict so fiercely waged, in the very streets and houses of a town. No sight yet witnessed by Alphonse had so painfully impressed him as that which met his view, when called from his position in the fir-wood to assist in the defence of the town. The darkness of night increased the gloomy horror of the scene. The heavy cannon swept the once peaceful streets,

and from houses where domestic groups had been wont to assemble, came the fierce discharge which filled the place with death. The corpses of children and their mothers mingled with those of armed men; and the shrieks of girls and the wail of women were heard in the pauses of the cannonade. But these horrors were soon effaced from the mind of Alphonse by the later incidents of that disastrous night.

Step by step, in spite of direful resistance, and in the midst of dreadful carnage, the republican forces were making their way through the town. As a last resource, a chosen body of the Vendean's had been established in the outskirts, in order to ensure the defence of the last tenable position against the advancing foe. At a late hour of the night, Alphonse, who had been foremost in the battle within the streets, finding further efforts useless in that quarter, made his way to join this body of reserve. But here, also, he found the tumult raging, here, also, he found the fierce hand-to-hand conflict engaging men of all grades, chiefs and soldiers without distinction, and strewing the ground with corpses. Here, to his unutterable dismay, he recognized Henri on foot, disengaging himself from his dying horse. Alphonse instantly dismounted, and hastened to his assistance. He was unwounded, but almost heart-broken by the terrible aspect of affairs.

“One more effort,” he exclaimed, “one last charge, I must lead on, before I believe it to be hopeless. And now my horse has fallen—the second I have lost to-night. Alphonse!—at last, I do despair!”

“Take my horse,” exclaimed Alphonse; “your presence is most essential to cheer on the men; I shall find probably, yonder, among the dying and the dead, some horse not required by his fallen master.”

Hardly waiting to exchange another word, the impetuous leader was mounted on the steed of his companion, and again, with that ubiquitous impulse which characterised him, was flying in all directions, collecting together his men to make one final charge upon the main body of the enemy, now advancing. Meanwhile, Alphonse wandered towards that part of the field where the combat had lately been at its height, with the intention of taking possession of any unwounded horse that might be near its lifeless master, for the cavalry regiment had been stationed at the outpost, and the ground was covered with the bodies of men and horses, dying and dead. About to grasp the bridle of the first animal he encountered, he found it still grasped in the hand of its lifeless rider. Stooping to disengage it from the corpse lying at his feet, Alphonse stopped, paralysed with horror. The sight which met his view turned his heart

to stone. Cold and rigid in death he recognized his father ! After a moment's breathless agony, Alphonse tenderly raised the body, seeking eagerly for some faint token of remaining life, but in vain : the heart of the Vendean chief beat no more. His father was dead ; and Alphonse, kissing the cold face, threw himself on the ground, and wept with anguish. Every other thought vanished before that overwhelming grief. His father was dead : never again should he hear his voice of counsel, never again encounter his kindly glance ; and, to add to the bitterness of his grief, that father, the once powerful lord of adoring retainers, had died alone. No son had caught the last words of blessing, trembling on his dying lips ; no friendly hand had raised the drooping head, and ministered to his last necessities. The Marquis de Chatillon had perished in a general *mélée*, by the hand of the republicans, whom he abhorred.

Not long did Alphonse yield to this overpowering grief ; the sorrow of the son yielded to the duty of the soldier. The son of Chatillon must not be absent from his post even to mourn over his lifeless father ; but he could not leave that sacred body to be trampled under the feet of the advancing multitude. Tenderly placing the remains of the Marquis upon the faithful steed, which had carried him through many a weary march, and many a hard-fought fight, Alphonse sought, under

the shelter of the nearest house, a spot not likely to be disturbed, and here he carefully laid the precious charge, covering it with his cloak, and resolving to return and seek it, should he survive the night. Alphonse then mounted his father's steed, and hastened to regain the ranks ; but he joined his friends only in time to share in their discomfiture.

The little band hastily assembled by Henri, was unable, notwithstanding its heroic efforts, to withstand the onset of the victorious republicans ; and when the cheering voice of Larochejaquelein was no longer heard, when his plume was no longer seen in the thickest of the fight, then the last spark of hope vanished from the hearts of the Vendees ; already vanquished, they soon utterly dispersed, and a scene of agony and horror followed. The swords of the republicans became no longer the glorious weapons of the warrior, but the massacreing knives of butchers. The women and children who had accompanied their husbands and fathers from their dwellings in the Bocage, fell by hundreds and thousands in the indiscriminate slaughter which ensued. Youth and age, the beautiful and the brave, perished together, by that ignoble death ; few, indeed, would have escaped, but for the intrepidity of two or three gallant officers, of whose number was Alphonse de Chatillon, who, mustering to their

aid a few soldiers who yet retained a remnant of strength and courage, contrived, almost by incredible efforts, to cover the retreat of such of the fugitives as escaped the general massacre.

Few were their numbers, and pitiful their condition, who, a few days afterwards, assembled together on the banks of the Loire. Here, to the unspeakable joy of those who had believed him dead, Henri Larochejaquelein again appeared among the remnants of his once gallant army. He had been wounded and unhorsed in the *mélée*, but had escaped with his life. Alphonse, returning the day after the battle, in the hope of discovering the body of his father, had met Henri, feeble and wounded, accompanied by some who, like himself, had escaped death, endeavouring to join the main body of the fugitives. With tears of joy the recovered friends embraced each other; and the young Commander, after lamenting the death of the gallant Marquis, with some difficulty persuaded Alphonse to abandon his pious object.

“At the present moment,” he said, “we cannot afford to lose a soldier like yourself; the risk is too great to be incurred. The gallant Marquis has died a soldier’s death—let him sleep on the field of battle—peace be with him! Alas, Alphonse, how many of our friends have gone before us; and what little hope remains to us of fulfilling the duties they have bequeathed us!”

Bitter, indeed, were now the reflections of the once gay and sanguine Henri. The depression of a buoyant temperament is ever the most painful and extreme; but even then, in the depths of his desolation, duty was still a beacon to cheer that gallant heart. His usual care and forethought was exercised in the organisation of his remaining troops, and towards a town on the banks of the Loire, they now marched, after the delay necessary to recruit their worn-out strength. Once more on the banks of the Loire—once more turning their wearied eyes towards their beloved homes, stood the remnants of the Vendean army. Only two small boats were in their possession, quite insufficient to transport them over.

“Look!” cried Henri, grasping the arm of Alphonse, who was by his side.

Alphonse followed the direction of his companion’s glance, and saw, moored to the opposite bank, a number of large vessels loaded with hay.

“Let us cross in the little boats, and take possession of them,” cried Larochejaquelein, with his former enthusiasm in his eyes.

“Not you!” said his friend, attempting to detain him. “I will go, and some others; remain you here.”

“Come with me if you will, Alphonse; but dissuade me not. The courage of the soldier is now more essential than any skill of generalship.”

And so, indeed, it proved, for so dangerous was the passage (swollen by the winter rains) and so frail the bark, that the boldest among the soldiers hesitated ; and it was not until they saw Henri himself within the boat, and heard the cheering voice, which they were accustomed to obey, calling on them to follow him, that their fears yielded to their love and obedience, and a hundred volunteers advanced. In a few moments, the little boats bearing Henri, Alphonse, and a chosen number of followers were on their way across the river watched by eager thousands. In safety they reached the opposite bank, and instantly, and with the vigour of renewed hope, the task of unloading the vessels was commenced. With joy the anxious crowd beheld the success which promised the speedy realisation of their last hopes. With joy they made ready to embark on the expected vessels, when the discharge of musketry suddenly startled them from their pleasant dreams ; and with an amazement and horror not to be described they beheld, on the opposite bank, the dreaded republican forces attacking and putting to flight their beloved leader and his little band, and thus cutting off their last hope of regaining their native homes. Terror-stricken they turned from the fatal river, and fled in confusion and dismay.

Henri and his companions, surprized by the enemy at the very moment when they believed their

object to be obtained, fought with their accustomed valour, but without the least prospect of success, as they, almost single-handed, were attacked by overwhelming numbers. With difficulty Larochejaquelein extricated his men from their perilous position ; the boats were lost, the river was cut off from them, and on the further shore they caught a glimpse of the receding forms of their companions, as they too sought safety in flight. Under shelter of a neighbouring forest, Larochejaquelein and his followers paused. They were safe for the present ; and here Henri, leaning his head against a tree, wept those scalding tears which only once or twice in a lifetime are wrung from a brave man's heart.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE strength of the republic had prevailed, yet the heroism of La Vendée still resisted. Vanquished, but invincible, the children of the Bocage astonished their opponents by the unparalleled patience and indomitable perseverance which rendered them still redoubtable, even when their swords were too few to enable them, as formerly, to exhibit their valour in the field. The army of the Vendéans had been annihilated by that last blow which had deprived it of its leader, and cut off from it its last refuge. But in the dissipated relics of that once united force, still survived the spirit which had impelled the Vendéans beyond the Loire, and had made them the victors in so many hard-fought battles, and the masters of so many well-defended towns. That undying spirit of heroism still manifested itself, in the dauntless bands of desperate men who hovered upon the traces of the republicans, and who in many a deathful struggle revenged the blood of their

kindred, which had been so ruthlessly poured forth like water. Such a band was constituted in the forest of Vesins by Henri, and Alphonse, and their companions, to whom many fugitives continually joined themselves. The valour and intrepidity of this little army soon rendered it formidable, despite its scanty numbers ; and the chivalrous bearing of its Chieftain, his humanity to the prisoners who fell into his hands, and his magnanimity to all opponents fewer in number and weaker than himself, would have earned respect from foes capable of appreciating such characteristics. But the republican soldiers engaged in the Vendean war appeared to regard the Vendees, not as the objects of honourable warfare, but as an abhorred race doomed to extermination.

With some difficulty Henri, at times, restrained his soldiery from giving way to a natural desire for vengeance when some stragglers from the republican army occasionally fell into their hands. On one occasion Larochejaquelein came upon a party of his men as their muskets were turned upon two grenadiers who, separated from their companions, had entered the forest. Full of horror at an act which, to his chivalrous soul, appeared a murder, Henri interposed ; signing to his men to desist, he advanced alone towards the soldiers, exclaiming :

“ Surrender, I give you quarter !”

Perhaps incredulous of the existence of a magnanimity of which their own actions never bore a token, the soldiers, for all reply, raised their guns and fired—with fatal effect. Henri fell, as his friends and soldiers gathered round him, and the arms of Alphonse tenderly sustained the dying hero. Human help was vain. Only a few moments of life remained to Henri Larochejaquelein ! They were passed in acts of devotion and tender adieu to his comrades in arms ; and taking the hand of Alphonse within his own :

“ Farewell, my early friend,” he murmured in low, faint accents, “ together we have fought and suffered. You alone, may God grant it ! will live to see the victory for which we have sighed. But not now, Alphonse. It is only a protracted death-struggle which can be carried on here. Heed my last injunction—withdraw yourself, for a time, till the fury of the storm is over ; and then, when a brighter day is dawning for France—come back and fight and conquer ; and in your hour of victory remember Henri—” Exhausted with so much exertion, the dying youth paused, and then again recovering himself, added, as he saw the tears coursing down the cheeks of Alphonse : “ Do not grieve for me, Alphonse ; I could not have lived away from La Vendée, while my arm could

wield a sword: sooner or later the blow must have come to me. All our friends fallen round us. But you may yet be spared—a future is before you. The house of Chatillon may again be numbered among the pillars of the throne. Obey my last wish, Alphonse, and live for France as I—I thank God, according to my repeated prayer—die for her.” A few more words of tenderness and resignation, and that gentle heart had ceased to beat, that chivalrous spirit, which in a brief existence of only twenty years had given so many proofs of gallantry and heroism, had fled. Henri de Larocheja-quelein was no more. Sadly, with broken hearts and tearful eyes, his followers consigned their Chieftain to the grave, in his soldier’s accoutrements; and as they heaped up the earth upon his last resting-place:

“ Now, indeed,” said Alphonse, “ the Convention may say that La Vendée no longer exists.”

Through that gloomy night, pacing to and fro by the grave of him whom he had loved so well—the last link of that gallant band with whom his career in arms had been associated—Alphonse abandoned himself to bitter reflection, and shed tears of heartfelt anguish. His father and his friends had fallen; the cause to which he was pledged was, for the present at least, hopeless; the royalists were in exile, and France was in the hands

of rebels ! Before him was only a sad alternative—an ignominious death, or flight: which from his soul he, the worthy son of the Marquis de Châtillon, abhorred.

So, through the long night, he kept his lonely watch, yielding to an overwhelming despair; but as the grey dawn made itself visible in the east, better thoughts returned to his heart. Hope, the child of Faith, again inspired him.

“Shall no dawn arise for France?” cried the voice of his patriotism. “Forbid it, Heaven ! Though Larochejaquelein is in his grave, though our forces are dissipated, and our arms have failed, the cause of France will prevail—justice and truth must ultimately triumph. How much, in my own short experience, have I not seen of wrong and injustice on all sides ! Happily, there is One who out of evil can bring good—good for France let it be, oh, Heaven ! and my father and my comrades will not have died in vain ! For that same sacred cause, let me, too, live or die.”

Animated with this one thought, Alphonse again reviewed his own position, and the wisdom of Larochejaquelein’s words acquired new force. Here, he could only add one other unit to the already countless list of victims; while on some future day—on that future day which he firmly believed would dawn—the heir of the house of

Chatillon might take his place in the councils of Frenchmen, and serve the cause of his country not only with his single arm, but with the influence of his father's name. And now, when duty no longer detained him in the field, the thought of Annette once more allured his heart towards the land which held her. In the hour of his bereavement and defeat, his soul instinctively yearned for the solace of her who could best pour balm into his wounds—the Heaven-appointed helpmate for man in his time of trial.

Nevertheless, so reluctant was the son of Chatillon to quit the post of danger, that some weeks had elapsed after the death of Henri, Alphonse and his companions had together faced the foe many times, and again and again lamented the decimation of their band, before the full conviction of the utter hopelessness of their position induced them to abandon it.

After many delays and difficulties, Alphonse once more found himself upon the sea, sailing towards England, with sentiments how different from those with which he had once set forth upon a similar voyage! Then his father lived, and Henri and De Lescure and others of that gallant group of chieftains who have sanctified the name of La Vendée for all time.

Then he had proudly dreamed that, by his

means, victory would be assured ; and now—alone, friendless—in defeat—in flight—in exile, he was seeking a foreign land, to live in ignominy. No wonder that bitter drops dimmed his gaze as the shores of France receded from his view ; no wonder that sorrow mingled with his joy as he again clasped Annette in his arms, and heard her, with grateful tears, thank Heaven for his preservation —the object of her reiterated prayers.

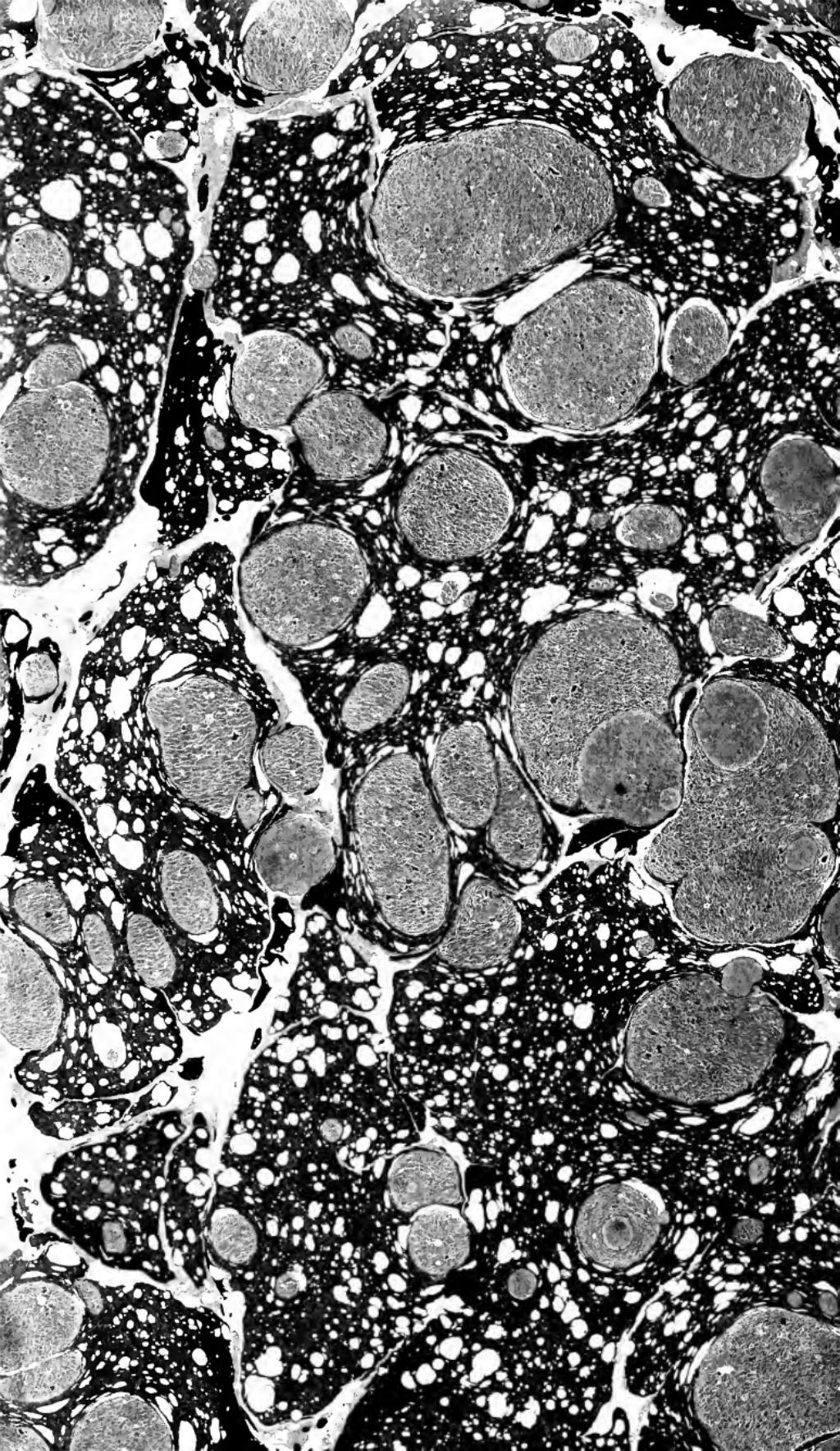
When internal peace was again restored to France by the politic measures of the First Consul, and the exiles were recalled to the land of their forefathers, Chatillon and his wife, accompanied by Delille and Philippe, who had faithfully followed his master through his vicissitudes, obeyed the summons. The heart of Alphonse filled with joy as he again trod his native soil, and so firmly did he adhere to his vow of patriotism, inspired by the dying words of Henri, and rooted in his heart by years of absence from his fatherland, that his loyalty to his King (his Vendean birthright) did not prevent him from admiring in the First Consul those acts which had for their object the good of France. The loyalty of the Vendean had merged into the patriotism of the Frenchman. *La patrie avant tout !* became the motto of Alphonse. Yet so strong was his sympathy for the cause in which his youth had been nourished,

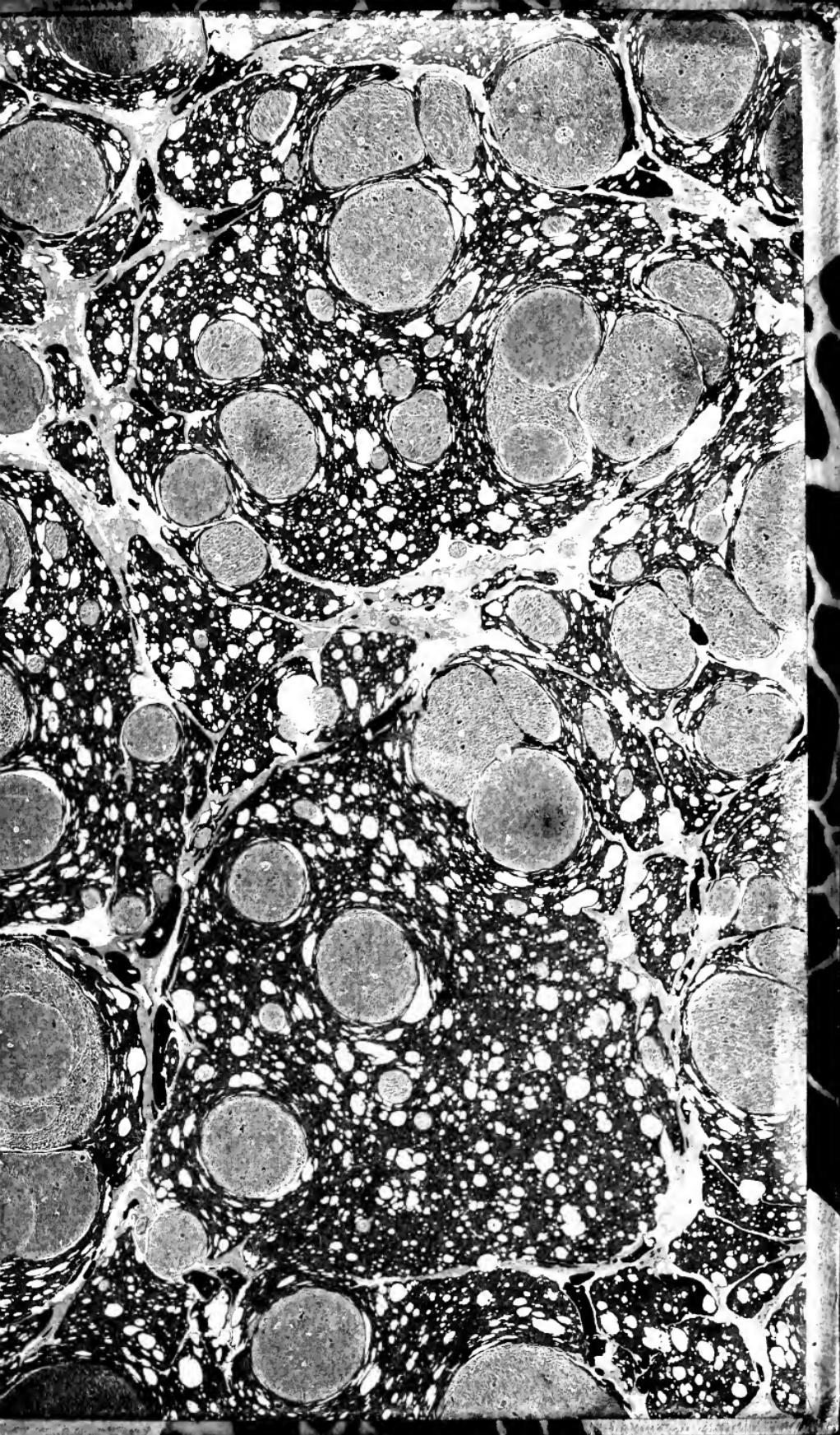
and to which his manhood had been devoted—the cause for which he had fought and suffered—the cause for which La Vendée had struggled, and his father and friends had fallen, that it was in truth a proud and happy day for Alphonse—a day which effaced the suffering of the past, and brightened the future of his existence, when after having again done battle for a Bourbon King, he presented to the restored monarch his young Henri, as the grandson of a Vendean chief.

THE END.

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